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Conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality (A/69/530). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 18 February 2015.

2. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit for consideration and approval at the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly a report containing the final conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality. The Secretary-General indicates that the report contains the final conclusions of the Working Group and is submitted pursuant to the resolution (see A/69/530, para. 3).

II. Background

3. In the report, the Secretary-General states that the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination approved the United Nations security management system guidelines for acceptable risk in 2009 and that, in 2010, the High-level Committee on Management established the Working Group on Programme Criticality, chaired by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The programme criticality framework was approved by the High-level Committee on Management and endorsed by the Chief Executives Board in 2012, and rolled out to 12 priority countries in 2012 and 2013. A slightly revised framework was then developed and approved by the High-level Committee on Management and the Chief Executives Board in 2013 (ibid., paras. 4 and 5).



4. The Secretary-General indicates that the framework details guiding principles, including applicability, accountability, quality assurance, approval and the programme criticality process; the programme criticality methodology and criteria for assessment; programme criticality as part of the security risk management process; and the programme criticality support structures of the United Nations system. He also indicates that the framework contributes to informed decision-making by outlining a process for determining the programme criticality levels for specific activities carried out by United Nations personnel within a given geographical location and time frame. In the report, it is stated that, as programme criticality is not a planning process or a product, it does not affect intergovernmental oversight and accountability to legislative bodies (*ibid.*, paras. 6 and 7). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the guidelines for determining acceptable risk focus exclusively on the management of security risks rather than all forms of risk; however, in countries affected by health-related emergencies, programme criticality assessments, which use a comprehensive and structured methodology, can help to assess the criticality of programmes.

5. The Secretary-General indicates that, to date, support has been provided to 15 countries and training sessions on programme criticality have been carried out with United Nations teams at the country level and various Headquarters personnel. An independent review of programme criticality conducted in January 2014 concluded that, overall, the programme criticality framework was working as intended and that no major immediate changes to the current framework were envisaged. It is expected that programme criticality will continue to be supported by the Steering Committee and the Coordination Team on the basis of voluntary contributions and that training efforts will be prioritized to ensure that programme criticality is mainstreamed into the operations of the United Nations system (*ibid.*, paras. 10-14).

III. Funding

6. The Secretary-General states that support for the roll-out has been provided on a low-cost basis, with seven participating agencies or departments making voluntary contributions to the cost of the independent review of programme criticality and UNICEF funding 50 per cent of the secretariat and other programme criticality support activities (*ibid.*, para. 8). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the overall cost of the programme is \$379,040, an amount that includes the development and testing of the programme criticality e-package, support for global management and coordination, training and the independent review of programme criticality. The Committee was also informed that the costs of the secretariat mainly consist of staff salaries, specifically for one P-4 staff member from UNICEF working at 50 per cent on programme criticality for 2.5 years (from 2011 to 2014) and, currently, for one P-2 staff member from UNICEF working at 50-75 per cent on programme criticality. The Committee was provided, also upon enquiry, with the following table showing the breakdown of the overall cost according to contributions by participating organization.

(United States dollars)

<i>Agency department</i>	<i>Programme criticality coordination costs (Secretariat and roll-out support, including training)</i>	<i>Programme criticality e-tool (English and French versions)</i>	<i>Programme criticality independent review</i>	<i>Total</i>
DSS	10 000	–	10 000	20 000
DPA	–	–	10 000 (in process)	10 000
DPKO/DFS	–	–	10 000	10 000
OCHA	10 000	–	16 000	26 000
UNDP	10 000	–	10 000	20 000
UNHCR	10 000	–	10 000	20 000
UNICEF	244 000	9 040	–	253 040
WFP	10 000	–	10 000	20 000
Total	294 000	9 040	76 000	379 040

Abbreviations: DSS, Department of Safety and Security; DPA, Department of Political Affairs; DPKO, Department of Peacekeeping Operations; DFS, Department of Field Support; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; UNDP, United Nations Development Programme; UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund; WFP, World Food Programme.

7. Upon enquiry as to the funding of the contributions of United Nations Secretariat departments, the Advisory Committee was informed of the following:

(a) The \$20,000 contributed by the Department of Safety and Security was funded from the extrabudgetary Trust Fund for Security of Staff Members of the United Nations System;

(b) The \$10,000 committed by the Department of Political Affairs is to be funded from the extrabudgetary trust fund in support of political affairs (the contribution is currently being processed);

(c) The \$10,000 contributed by the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support was funded from the support account for peacekeeping operations;

(d) The \$26,000 contributed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was funded from the extrabudgetary Trust Fund for Strengthening the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

8. The Advisory Committee was further informed, upon enquiry, that the requirement of \$10,000 contributed by the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support mentioned in paragraph 7 (c) above was not reflected in the proposed budget for the support account for peacekeeping operations for the 2013/14 period (A/67/756), as the requirement had not been identified at that time. Nor was the requirement reflected in the related budget performance report (A/69/653), as it did not constitute a major variance to be captured in that report. **The Advisory Committee considers that the requirement should not have been charged to the support account for peacekeeping operations and intends to address this matter further in the context of its consideration of the Secretary-**

General's upcoming report on the proposed budget for the support account for peacekeeping operations for the 2015/16 period.

IV. Conclusion

9. The Advisory Committee recognizes the importance of the programme criticality framework for informed decision-making as part of the security risk management process and its contribution to staff safety and security. The Committee is of the view, however, that the Secretary-General's report lacks details on the operational functioning of the initiative.

10. The Advisory Committee was informed that, subsequent to resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/133, in which it encouraged the Secretary-General to continue consistent implementation of the programme criticality framework as an operational tool allowing informed decisions on acceptable risk to United Nations personnel. In this context, the Advisory Committee notes that the Secretary-General's report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/254 A and regrets that the report does not contain the final conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality for the Assembly's consideration and approval as requested in resolution 67/254 A. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with the full report of the High-level Working Group (see annex). In this regard, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit, as soon as possible, a report containing the final conclusions of the High-level Working Group to the Assembly for its consideration and approval.

Annex

United Nations System Programme Criticality Framework

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A. Introduction

1. The programme criticality framework is a common UN system framework for decision-making that puts in place guiding principles and a systematic structured approach in using programme criticality as a way to ensure that programme activities can be balanced against security risks.
2. The current document is a revision of the programme criticality framework approved by the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) on 17 October 2011, and subsequently endorsed by the Chief Executives Board (CEB) in its autumn 2011 session. This revision is based on the lessons learned from applying the framework in a number of countries between October 2011 and December 2012.
3. Programme criticality¹ (PC) is an important component of the United Nations Security Management System's (UNSMS) Guidelines for Acceptable Risk, approved by the CEB in April 2009.² PC is not a security function but is required for ensuring that critical programmes are implemented within levels of acceptable risk.

B. Guiding Principles

Applicability

4. The applicability of Programme Criticality is as defined in the UNSMS Policy Manual Chapter III: Applicability of United Nations Security Management System. A determination of programme criticality takes place through a PC assessment. Such assessments should be conducted for all activities that involve UN personnel.
5. Whilst the timing of undertaking programme criticality assessments should be determined at field level based on context and need, undertaking a UN-wide programme criticality assessment is mandatory in areas with residual risk levels of "high" and "very high", as determined in the Security Risk Assessments (SRAs). A PC assessment is also beneficial when deciding how and when to undertake activities in areas where residual risk is determined to be "medium".

Accountability

6. Primary accountability for programme criticality is with UN senior management at the country level. The Resident Coordinator (RC) is accountable for the conduct and quality of programme criticality assessments at country level. Where there is a peacekeeping or special political mission in place, and where the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSB)/Head of Mission has a mandate to coordinate UN activities in country, he/she has the final accountability.
7. The Designated Official (DO) is accountable to the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security (USG DSS), and is responsible for the security of UN personnel, premises and assets throughout the country or designated area. The DO is responsible for ensuring that the goal of the UN Security

¹ The concept of 'criticality' is to be understood to mean the critical impact of an activity on the population, not necessarily on the organisation.

² CEB/2009/HLCM/INF.1.

Management System is met in his/her country or area.³ As such, the DO uses the results of the PC assessment and endorses the decisions taken at country-level, taking both the PC assessment and the SRA into consideration.

8. In areas where other UN presences/envoys or their staff are operating, all activities involving UN personnel should be part of a given PC process under the existing leadership on the ground. However, it is likely that separate PC assessments would need to be carried out for each designated area.

9. Heads of UN entities operating in country (resident and non-resident) are required to ensure that their respective entities participate in a joint UN system PC assessment and use the results in the determination of acceptable risk. Each UN entity should allocate the needed capacity to do so.

Quality assurance

10. The quality of a specific PC assessment is the responsibility of the UN leadership on the ground.

11. The Programme Criticality Steering Committee (PCSC) at HQ level is responsible for providing quality assurance of the PC framework and its implementation. This entails responsibility for oversight and review of the PC framework. In addition, the PCSC is responsible to ensure that quality PC assessments are undertaken in country areas where this is needed, and where this is not the case, take action to ensure that the assessment takes place or is revised appropriately.⁴ As part of this role, the PCSC can recommend that the EGPC be convened to make a determination on PC levels for a specific setting, as described in further detail below.

The programme criticality process

12. The determination of the criticality level for specific UN activities within a given geographic location and timeframe is termed a programme criticality assessment.

13. The output of the PC assessment is a list of activities determined to be within four levels of programme criticality, PC1-PC4. PC1 activities are considered most critical.

14. With the help of the PC methodology and tool (described in detail below), the UN team in country⁵ rates which activities are PC2, PC3, PC4, and finally which are PC1. It is crucial that PC assessments are done jointly by the UN system in country as a whole and not by individual UN entities in order to provide a reality check by in-country experienced peer reviewers.

15. In identifying PC levels, the PC methodology uses existing UN planning frameworks already agreed at country level. It is thus not a planning framework.

³ United Nations Security Management System Policy Manual Chapter II: Section B Framework of Accountability for the United Nations Security Management System.

⁴ See Terms of Reference for PCSC (annex I). Further details on the PCSC can be found in Section E below.

⁵ The DSS role in this step is a programmatic one. DSS should list the outputs/activities that it sees as important, and should not be viewing any activities listed in this step from a threat and/or risk perspective.

16. The output of the PC assessment, that is the list of rated activities, along with the SRA that covers the corresponding geographic location and according to the policy for Determining Acceptable Risk, assists country level decision makers in determining which activities should be enabled based on the agreed level of acceptable risk. This helps to ensure that UN personnel do not take unnecessary risk and work on those activities that are likely to most contribute to existing UN strategic results. The framework also allows country-level programme managers to establish if programme activities or implementation modalities need to be redesigned in order to be within known acceptable risks and/or to reduce the risk.

17. In conjunction with undertaking PC assessments, the Security Management Team (SMT) must also ensure that a current SRA, outlining the residual risk levels, is in place.

Approval of programme criticality

18. Approval of levels PC1 – PC4 is given by the RC and in mission settings by the SRSG/Head of Mission as applicable, in line with the accountabilities outlined above. The final decision on which activities are enabled based on acceptable risk is with the DO.⁶

19. In situations where an activity involving UN personnel is determined to be PC1 and its implementation is associated with very high levels of residual risk, the Executive Head of the relevant UN entity must certify that the activity is PC1 and that it can be implemented in situations with very high residual risk. In such cases the final approval to enable that activity in a situation of very high residual risk is given by the USG DSS.

C. Overview of Programme Criticality methodology and criteria for assessment

20. The PC methodology provides a structured approach to determine programme criticality. The PC tool assists in applying this structured approach.

21. A programme criticality assessment has eight steps as follows:

1. Establish geographical scope and timeframe
2. List strategic results (SRs)
3. List UN activities/outputs (involving UN personnel)
4. Assess contribution to strategic results
5. Assess likelihood of implementation
6. Evaluate activities/outputs with PC1 criteria
7. View PC level results, form consensus within the UN system and approve final results
8. Agree on a process to address and manage the results of the PC assessment

⁶ See United Nations Security Management System Policy Manual Chapter II: Section B Framework of Accountability for the United Nations Security Management System.

22. Each step is described in further detail below. The criteria being used to assess activities/outputs are (1) Contribution to each of the SRs and (2) Likelihood of implementation. The contribution scores are averaged and multiplied by the likelihood of implementation score. The result determines the PC2-PC4 level for each of the considered activities/outputs.

23. To assist in completing the steps of a PC assessment, an excel-based tool is available. A separate PC guidance document is under development to provide further assistance and useful pointers in conducting a PC assessment.

Step 1 — Establish geographical scope and timeframe

24. The first step establishes the geographical scope/area and timeframe for the programme criticality assessment.

- ☐ The geographical scope/area of a PC assessment should be the same as the geographical area of the SRA, where possible, since this will make it easier to compare the result of the PC assessment to the residual security risk. Any differences in the areas should be noted and changes to either the PC area or an SRA area should be reflected in the next regular PC assessment.
- ☐ As a minimum, the PC assessment must be revisited every 12 months.
- ☐ In addition to the above, triggers for undertaking a PC assessment are changes in existing strategic plans or a significant change in the situation/programmatic conditions.
- ☐ Since individual activities may change in importance while strategic results remain the same, a Representative of a UN entity operating in-country could flag the possible change in programmatic conditions to the UN team on the ground at any time and ask for a review of the PC assessment.
- ☐ Scope and timeframe must be agreed before the next steps of the PC assessment are initiated.

Step 2 — List strategic results

25. The second step is to list the strategic results that the United Nations will work towards in the geographical area in the agreed timeframe.

- ☐ The SRs should be taken from the various existing planning documents that the UN system uses, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF), the Consolidated Appeal (CAP) or other planning documents.
- ☐ The methodology allows for entering up to 6 SRs by geographical area.
- ☐ Results should be described in 'change' language, which describes a change in the situation of an affected population, the performance of a service, the allocation of national resources, the existence of needed policies or any other observable change.

Step 3 — List activities/outputs involving United Nations personnel

26. The third step is to enter a list of all the activities or outputs the UN system wishes to implement in the said geographical area and timeframe, using UN personnel.

- ☐ The UN team in country must agree in advance whether activities or outputs should be listed. Listing outputs, at the level defined in the below footnote,⁷ is recommended rather than activities.
- ☐ If the activities/outputs do not require the presence of UN personnel to be implemented, they are not listed.
- ☐ The same list of activities/outputs should also be provided to DSS to undertake the "programme assessment" part of the SRA.
- ☐ Activities are inputs (things that we do to achieve an output) while outputs are the results we seek to achieve. Activities that are similar can be grouped together and entered once in the tool. It is important that there is agreement at the country level on whether to use outputs or activities and whether to group activities for each PC assessment so that entries are comparable.

Step 4 — Assess contribution to strategic results

27. The fourth step is to assess how each of the activities/outputs contributes to each of the strategic results.

- ☐ This assessment is on a 0-5 scale, with '0' representing 'no contribution' and '5' representing 'very high contribution to success'. The scores for the activity's contribution to each strategic result are averaged in the tool to get a score for that activity's total contribution to all the strategic results.
- ☐ It is critical that this step is undertaken by inter-agency groups to ensure peer review. The scoring is in essence relative and without having a common understanding between agencies of the scoring level comparison becomes futile.
- ☐ Before embarking on scoring all activities, a number of activities/outputs should be jointly rated by the inter-agency peer review group to set benchmarks for the scoring. This should include discussing how to score activities/outputs that can be termed as 'enablers' to programmes, such as coordination, policy/political advice, management and logistics support, etc.
- ☐ The framework does not affect UN activities implemented by third parties (government, I/NGOs, private sector, etc.) as long as such activities do not require UN personnel.

Step 5 — Assess likelihood of implementation

28. The fifth step requires the assessment of each activity/output according to its likelihood of implementation.

⁷ 'Outputs are changes in skills or abilities and capacities of individuals or institutions, or the availability of new products and services that result from the completion of activities within a [development] intervention *within the control of the organization*. They are achieved with the resources provided and within the time period specified' (UNDG Results-Based Management Handbook, 2011: <http://www.undg.org/docs/12316/UNDG-RBM%20Handbook-2012.pdf>).

- This assessment is conducted using a 1-5 scale identical to the likelihood scale used in the SRA (1: very unlikely, 2: unlikely, 3: moderately likely, 4: likely and 5: very likely).
- What is being assessed is whether we have the resources and capacity to implement the activities/outputs listed within the established timeframe. We are not assessing whether the activities themselves will be successful. The question 'how do you know you can do this?' is a useful pointer in this step.
- This is a subjective assessment of relative likelihood and should be guided by such variables as acceptance by local actors, logistics, availability of personnel, funding, etc. One variable that is not considered in judging likelihood of implementation is the security environment, because this variable has already been taken into consideration in the SRA.
- All activities/outputs must be assessed against the same variables and these must be agreed ahead of scoring.
- The importance of this step is a reality check of the ability to implement. UN entities should be able to justify the likelihood of implementation, and therefore it is encouraged to use as verifiable criteria as possible.

Step 6 — Evaluate activities with PC1 criteria

29. The sixth step is to evaluate each activity/output to see if it meets the criteria for PC1.

- There are two possible criteria for an activity to be considered a PC1 activity:
 - a. Either the activity is assessed as lifesaving (humanitarian or non-humanitarian) at scale (defined as any activity to support processes or services, including needs assessments), that would have an immediate and significant impact on mortality; or
 - b. The activity is a directed activity that receives the endorsement of the Office of the Secretary-General for this particular situation.
- If an activity meets either of these two criteria, it could be considered a PC1 activity and can be (but does not have to be) conducted in very high residual risk.
- Care should be taken to keep activities identified as PC1 to a minimum, because they could put UN personnel at very high residual risk.

Step 7 — View PC level results, form consensus within the UN system and approve final results

30. The seventh step is to view the PC levels of the various activities/outputs, form consensus within the UN system that this is the final rating agreed and finally approve the agreed results.

- Once agreed by the programme managers/peer reviewers, the final results must be validated by the UN team in country and approved by the RC or SRSG/Head of Mission as applicable (see paragraphs 18 and 19 above).

- In the unlikely event that consensus is not reached at country level, an Executive Group on Programme Criticality (EGPC),^{*} at USG level, can intervene to mediate and/or ultimately decide.

Step 8 — Agree on a process to address and manage the results of the PC assessment

31. The final step is to implement the results of the PC assessment. This entails using the results with the relevant SRA(s) and the policy on Determining Acceptable Risk to determine which programmes will be enabled based on an agreed level of acceptable risk. This may also include looking further into the application of risk mitigation measures for certain activities/outputs, and/or decisions on programme management. UN teams should define a process for implementation according to their contexts.

D. Programme Criticality as part of the SRM

32. The output of a PC assessment sits within the security management system as a core input to security decision making. It is one side of the balance when making decisions on whether a UN programme stays and delivers. The other side of the balance is the statement of the risk present at the current time, after the implementation of security risk management measures, in a specific location where the programme is being delivered; referred to as residual risk.

33. While the final decision-making on acceptable risk requires both the output of a PC assessment and determined residual risk levels, and these two components must be comparable, there are clear separations in determining PC and residual risk. Accordingly, two key principles must be adhered to in order for the process to be completed correctly:

- a. Risk level has no impact on programme criticality. There must be no consideration of risk level when determining PC.
- b. Programme criticality has no impact on risk level. There must be no consideration of PC when determining risk level.

34. As outlined above, a PC assessment is undertaken by the United Nations system at country level when there is a change in existing strategic plans or a significant change in the situation/programmatic conditions, specific to a geographical location. The PC methodology and tool will be used to assign one of four programme criticality levels (PC1, PC2, PC3 or PC4) to each activity/output. A relevant SRA provides residual risk levels and suggests risk mitigation measures to lower risk. These steps form the Security Risk Management process.

35. This process will allow the principles set out in the Guidelines for Acceptable Risk to establish the maximum level of residual risk that is acceptable for a specific level of programme criticality. Figure 1 below depicts this relationship between programme criticality level and residual risk within the Guidelines for Acceptable Risk. Accordingly, it is permissible to implement:

^{*} See Terms of Reference for EGPC (annex II). Further details on the EGPC can be found in Section E below.

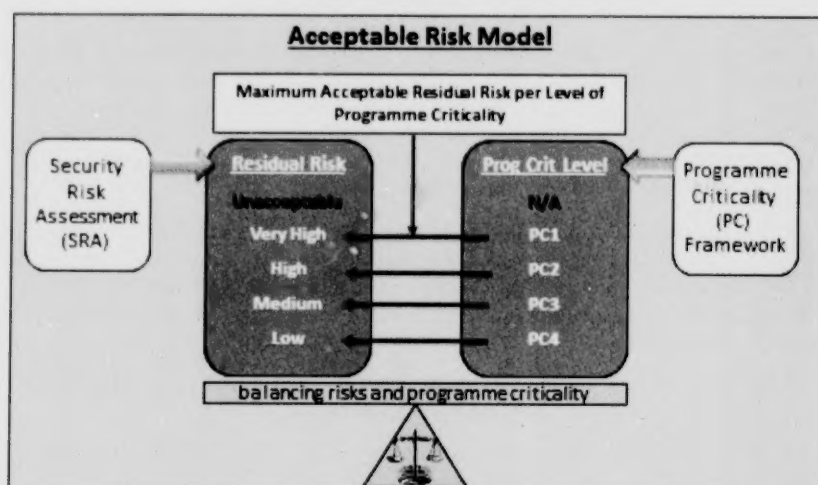
- PC1 activities only in **very high** residual risk environments;
- PC1-PC2 in **high** residual risk environments;
- PC1-PC2-PC3 in **medium** residual risk environments;
- PC1-PC2-PC3-PC4 in **low** residual risk environments.

Of course, it is possible (and often preferable) to conduct an activity in lower residual risk, but it is not permitted to accept more risk than assigned in the Acceptable Risk Model.

Figure 1

Balancing security risk with programme criticality

Conceptual Overview: Acceptable Risk Model balances Security Risk (SRA) with Programme Criticality (PC1-PC4)



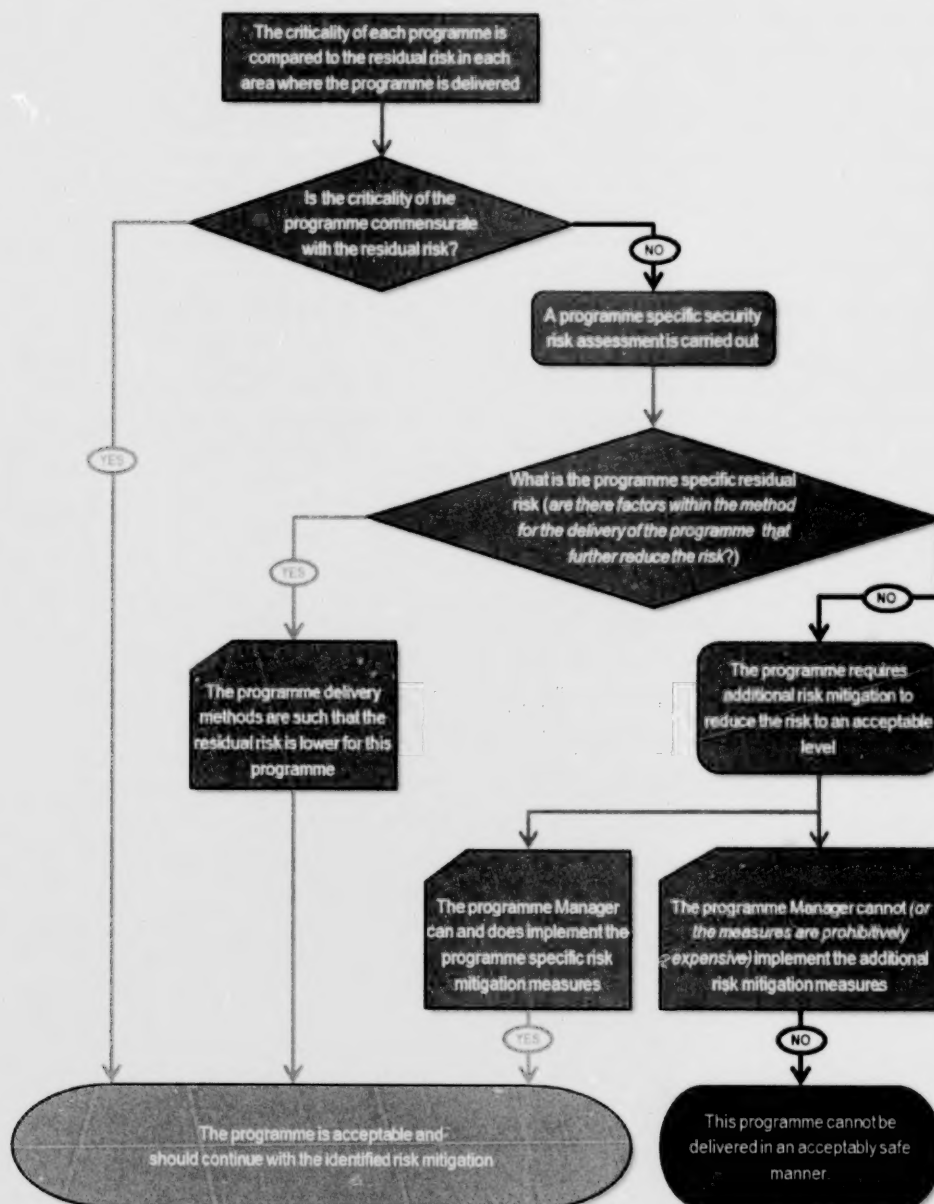
Operationalization of results

36. The output of the PC assessment will direct who, what, when and where UN programmes that require the presence of UN personnel can stay and deliver at an acceptable level of risk. While the SRA and PC processes are carried out separately, for the output of PC to be used effectively for security risk management decisions, there must be a clear statement of post security risk management residual risk to staff and programmes in every area where the programmes are to be delivered. For the Acceptable Risk Model and the PC framework to function appropriately, both residual risks and programme criticality must be realistically assessed.

37. Once the process of determining programme criticality is done, there are additional steps that need to be taken based on programme specific SRAs, as appropriate, to enable programme delivery. These steps are shown in figure II. Ultimately, together with a statement of residual risk, the PC level will inform managers in the field *what* can be delivered *where* with the presence of UN personnel. The information generated from the comparison of the PC level and the

residual risk level for a specific area will thus make it possible for managers to determine programme delivery strategies, where further risk mitigation measures might be needed, possible staff deployments, etc.

Figure 2
Security Risk Management enabling programmes



E. Programme Criticality Support Structures

38. The Executive Group on Programme Criticality, convened at USG level, is in place to facilitate rapid decision-making where there is an impasse and/or in the unlikely event that consensus on programme criticality levels is not reached at country level.⁹

39. Further, in specific fast evolving crisis situations, there may be a need to rapidly make a determination of PC levels to inform decisions on how to stay and deliver. In such situations, the EGPC can be convened within 24 hours by the Chair to determine PC levels for a particular setting and timeframe. The determination of PC levels in such a situation will be made in a manner to suit the context. Where relevant, the EGPC may agree to address only those activities that are to be considered PC1, and thereafter instruct the country level leadership to undertake a PC assessment for activities of levels PC2-PC4. Decisions taken must be recorded and shared with all concerned entities. Such an EGPC meeting can be requested by any UN system entity.

40. Beyond the situations described above, the Programme Criticality Steering Committee¹⁰ is the main point of contact for UN teams and senior leaders on programme criticality. The PCSC is responsible for providing quality assurance of the PC framework and its implementation. This entails responsibility for oversight and review of the PC framework. In addition, the PCSC is responsible to ensure that quality PC assessments are undertaken in country areas where this is needed, and where this is not the case, take action to ensure that the assessment in question takes place or is revised appropriately. As part of this role, the PCSC can recommend that the EGPC be convened to make a determination on PC levels for a specific setting, as described above.

41. The PCSC is supported by a technical level Programme Criticality Coordination Team (PCCT) and its Secretariat. It is envisaged that these mechanisms be dissolved once a number of agreed indicators, outlined below, are in place.

42. Indicators of success for completion of the PCSC role are:

- ☐ PC framework and guidance documents have been approved;
- ☐ PC framework has been disseminated to all UN teams on the ground;
- ☐ Briefings on PC have been held with relevant HQ fora;
- ☐ Successful completion and use of the results of a PC assessment in a significant number of countries, including in a few mission settings;
- ☐ A significant PC expert pool of UN personnel from various agencies/departments with solid knowledge of the PC framework and methodology is in place;

⁹ See EGPC Terms of Reference (annex II).

¹⁰ See PCSC Terms of Reference (annex I).

- ☐ Expertise on PC is maintained and mainstreamed within agencies/departments;
- ☐ Agreed plan (which is joint to the extent possible) to roll out PC and have capacity for PC individually within agencies/departments.

Validity of the PC framework

43. The PC framework will be reviewed on a biennial basis, the review to be overseen by the PCSC.

Annex I

Terms of Reference

Executive Group on Programme Criticality (EGPC)

1. The Executive Group Programme Criticality (EGPC) was established by the CEB on 28 October 2011.
2. The purpose of the EGPC is to reinforce the decision making process established through the "Programme Criticality Framework," which is a common UN system framework and methodology to define levels of programme criticality, and thus to inform decision-making within the guidelines for acceptable risk.
2. The EGPC will have the following functions:
 - a. In the event that there is an impasse and/or lack of consensus on programme criticality levels at country level, the EGPC can either intervene to mediate or convene to determine PC levels for the specific situation in question.
 - b. In specific fast evolving crisis situations, there may be a need to rapidly facilitate a determination of PC levels to make urgent decisions about acceptable risk for UN staff. In such situations, the EGPC can be convened within 24 hours by the Chair to determine PC levels for a particular setting and timeframe. The determination of PC levels in such a situation will be made in a manner to suit the context. Where relevant, the EGPC may agree to address only those activities that are to be considered PC1, and thereafter instruct the country level leadership to undertake a PC assessment for activities of levels PC2-PC4. Decisions taken must be recorded and shared with all concerned entities.
 - c. The EGPC shall not meet or act as an appellate body.

Composition and Working Modalities

3. The EGPC shall be convened at USG level, and chaired by (TBD). This will be on biannual rotating basis.
4. The EGPC shall be comprised of the following organizations of the UN Security Management System: OCHA, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and up to two Executive Heads of UN organisations/USGs of Secretariat Departments, ideally those with the largest operational footprint in the affected country. DSS will participate as an observer.
5. Any UN system entity can contact the Chair and request that the EGPC convenes.
6. If needed, secretariat support for the EGPC will be provided by the PCCT Secretariat. If there is no PC Secretariat in place, such functions shall be covered by the office of the EGPC Chair.

Annex II

Terms of Reference

Programme Criticality Steering Committee (PCSC)

Background

1. The Programme Criticality Steering Committee (PCSC) was established by the HLCM on 7-8 March 2013 to provide oversight and quality assurance over the UN System's work on Programme Criticality, as outlined in the UN System Programme Criticality Framework.
2. The PCSC replaces the Working Group on Programme Criticality (PCWG), which was initially established by the HLCM in June 2010 to define levels of programme criticality, develop a common framework for decision making within the Guidelines for Acceptable Risk and support a roll-out of the PC framework. Following completion of the work of the PCWG, the PCSC is established to function as the main oversight body of programme criticality.

Functions

3. The PCSC is responsible to:
 - Be the main point of contact for UN teams and senior leaders on programme criticality;
 - Provide oversight of implementation of programme criticality;
 - Provide advice on the need for review of the PC Framework;
 - Provide quality assurance of the PC framework and its implementation, which entails ensuring that quality PC assessments are undertaken in country settings where this is needed, and where this is not the case, take action to ensure that the assessment in question takes place or is revised appropriately. The PCSC will not take a pro-active role in this regard, but rather respond to concerns raised;
 - As part of providing quality assurance, the PCSC can recommend that the Executive Group Programme Criticality be convened to break an impasse (see EGPC ToR for further details on the EGPC role).
4. The PCSC will provide updates on Programme Criticality to the HLCM and CEB upon request.

Composition and Working Modalities

5. The PCSC shall be convened at Director level, and chaired by [TBD]. The PCSC shall be comprised of the following organizations of the UN Security Management System: DOCO, DPA, DPKO, DSS, FAO, OCHA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO.
6. The membership of the PCSC is open; any UN system organization can request to become a member of the PCSC.
7. The PCSC shall convene at a minimum every 4 months. Meetings can occur as needed within these minimum intervals.

8. The PCSC is supported by a technical level Programme Criticality Coordination Team (PCCT) and its Secretariat. The PCCT is chaired at the technical level by the same organization chairing the PCSC. It is envisaged that the PCSC and PCCT will be dissolved based on the following agreed indicators:

- ☐ PC framework and guidance documents have been approved;
- ☐ PC framework has been disseminated to all UN teams on the ground;
- ☐ Briefings on PC have been held with relevant HQ fora;
- ☐ Successful completion and use of the results of a PC assessment in a significant number of countries, including in a few mission settings;
- ☐ A significant PC expert pool of UN personnel from various agencies/departments with solid knowledge of the PC framework and methodology is in place;
- ☐ Expertise on PC is maintained and mainstreamed within agencies/departments;
- ☐ Agreed plan (which is joint to the extent possible) to roll out PC and have capacity for PC individually within agencies/departments.



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Standards of accommodation for air travel

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel (A/69/643 and Corr.1). The report of the Secretary-General was submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 42/214, 45/248 A, 53/214, 63/268, 65/268 and 67/254 A and decisions 44/442 and 46/450, as well as decision 57/589, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit his report to it on a biennial basis. During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 20 February 2015.

2. The Advisory Committee also had before it, for information, the report of the Board of Auditors on United Nations peacekeeping operations for the 12-month period ended 30 June 2014 (A/69/5 (Vol. II)), which contains information on the audit of official travel for peacekeeping operations conducted by the Board in response to a request of the Advisory Committee.

3. The report of the Secretary-General (A/69/643 and Corr.1) provides information on first-class travel and exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel authorized by the Secretary-General, including an indication of the reasons for the exceptions and the resulting additional costs. It covers the two-year period ended 30 June 2014 and provides comparative statistics for the two-year period ended 30 June 2012, as well as trend analyses for the past 10 years.

II. Background

4. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 65/268, requested the Secretary-General to improve, as a matter of urgency, the

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management of air travel in the United Nations, including through the implementation of the measures set out in the annex to the resolution, and to pursue a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at the first part of its resumed sixty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution and on practical steps taken to enhance the effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel in the United Nations. In response to that request the Secretary-General submitted a report on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/676), which contained his recommendations for steps to enhance that utilization in the United Nations. In its related report (A/66/739), the Advisory Committee indicated that it did not object to most of the proposals of the Secretary-General and made numerous comments and observations on them.

5. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly took note of the reports of the Secretary-General (A/66/676 and A/67/356) and endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the reports of the Advisory Committee (A/66/739 and A/67/636), subject to the provisions of the resolution. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided that, for official travellers below the level of Assistant Secretary-General, the standard of accommodation for air travel would be business class if a single-leg journey was 9 hours or more and business class for a multi-leg journey if the combined travel time of the journey was 11 hours or more, including a maximum of 2 hours of connection time, provided that the journey to the next destination resumed within 12 hours. The Assembly also decided that the existing standards of accommodation for air travel and daily subsistence allowance of members of organs and/or subsidiary organs, committees, councils and commissions of the United Nations would remain unchanged.

6. The Secretary-General indicates in his report (A/69/643 and Corr.1) that he has promulgated administrative instruction ST/AI/2013/3 for the purpose of implementing the various staff rules relating to the standards of accommodation for air travel and the exceptions thereto.

III. Observations and recommendations

A. Exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General

7. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly noted the increasing frequency and costs of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel during the two-year period ended 30 June 2012 (see A/67/356) and requested the Secretary-General to take action to limit the use of exceptions, to conduct an analysis of the trends in the use of exceptions and to present proposals for enhancing controls in that area no later than the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly.

8. In his report (A/69/643 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General provides information on the authority granted to him by the General Assembly for exercising his discretion in making exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel on a case-by-case basis when, in his opinion, there were special circumstances that warranted it, such as for: (a) a medical condition; (b) the travel of eminent persons; (c) the travel of prominent persons; (d) arduous journeys; (e) travel undertaken to provide close protection security services; or (f) when the regular standard of accommodation was not available.

9. In his report, the Secretary-General also provides information on the aggregated exceptions approved by the Secretary-General for the United Nations and affiliated entities (*ibid.*, tables 1 and 2) and separately for the United Nations Secretariat (*ibid.*, tables 3 and 4). Analysis of the data in the tables shows that the overall number of exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General for first- and business-class travel for the Secretariat and its affiliated entities continued to increase during the period 2012-2014, rising from 529 exceptions authorized in 2010-2012 to 747 in 2012-2014 and reflecting an increase of 41.2 per cent, with a corresponding increase in additional travel costs from \$1,268,934 to \$2,301,488, or 81.4 per cent. Further analysis shows the following:

(a) The total number of exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General for first-class travel decreased by 36.5 per cent, from 137 in the period 2010-2012 to 87 in the period 2012-2014, while the overall additional cost decreased to a lesser extent, from \$616,782 to \$607,998, reflecting a reduction of 1.4 per cent. The Advisory Committee was informed that the definition of "eminent persons" had changed in 2013, limiting the category to current and former Heads of State and Government, resulting in the transfer of some requests from the category of eminent persons (eligible for first-class travel) to the category of prominent persons;

(b) For business class travel, however, the total number of exceptions for the Secretariat and its affiliated agencies rose from 392 exceptions authorized in the period 2010-2012 to 660 in the period 2012-2014, reflecting an increase of 68.4 per cent, while the additional travel costs increased from approximately \$652,000 to \$1.7 million, respectively;

(c) A large number of the exceptions authorized for business-class travel related to prominent travellers, whose share had increased disproportionately from 153, or 39 per cent of the total number of 392 exceptions authorized during the period 2010-2012 to 459 in the period 2012-2014, representing 70 per cent of the total number of 660 exceptions authorized during the period 2012-2014. For the Secretariat the number of exceptions for prominent travellers increased from 87, out of a total of 228 exceptions (38.2 per cent) in the period 2010-2012, to 234, out of a total of 392 exceptions (59.7 per cent) authorized in period 2012-2014 (see para. 9 (a) above);

(d) The number of exceptions authorized for other reasons did not evolve significantly, apart from the number of exceptions granted for the travel of security detail officers, which increased from 9 in the period 2010-2012 to 25 in the period 2012-2014.

10. The Advisory Committee requested further information on the overall number of trips and related costs, in order to gain a better understanding of overall travel activity and the significance of the number and additional costs of exceptions in the overall picture, as well as on the impact of the changes made in August 2013 to the standards of accommodation for air travel. The Committee was informed that such information was not available; however, it was provided with limited information on the costs of tickets as recorded in the eight Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) databases and on travel arranged and ticketed through the Headquarters travel agency. While the data provided is indicative only, reflecting a partial view of travel expenditures, it is included, for information purposes, in the annex to the present report.

11. The Advisory Committee notes that the requests contained in General Assembly resolution 67/254 A regarding the limitation of the use of exceptions and the presentation of proposals for enhancing controls in this area have not been fulfilled. The Committee recommends that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to proactively limit the number of exceptions and to strengthen internal controls in this regard, and to report on progress achieved in his next report.

12. In paragraph 14 of his report, the Secretary-General indicates that the average additional cost per trip for the Secretariat increased to \$2,666, compared with \$1,641 during the period 2010-2012, the increase being attributable to two cases of emergency medical repatriations of staff members and to the global trend of increasing airfares. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that if the two cases of medical repatriations were to be excluded, the average additional cost per trip during the period 2012-2014 would amount to \$2,276, compared with \$1,641 during the period 2010-2012. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that future reports should provide simple averages and statistical averages without outliers for such data, in order to facilitate more meaningful comparisons over time.**

B. Prominent traveller category

13. In paragraph 13 of his report, the Secretary-General indicates that the promulgation of administrative instruction ST/AI/2013/3, which made economy class the standard accommodation for air travel for non-staff personnel providing services to the Organization, resulted in more requests for exceptions in the period 2012-2014, especially for the category of prominent travellers — in some cases, travellers in this category were previously eligible for the same standards of accommodation as staff members. He further indicates that large numbers of prominent persons provided their services to the Organization without remuneration, including by participating in substantive meetings; by participating as members of technical and advisory committees; and by providing input at high-level panels.

14. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that in his report on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/676), the Secretary-General proposed that all travellers, other than staff members and members of committees and panels, but including consultants and individual contractors, be required to travel in economy class. In its related report, the Advisory Committee included information provided to it upon request regarding the types of travellers that would be included under the scope of the category “all other travellers”¹ (A/66/739, paras. 17-20). Furthermore, while it did not object to the proposed measure, the Committee had pointed out in its report that the Secretary-General had not offered any justification for the other listed categories of travellers being subject to a different standard of accommodation from staff members and members of committees and panels, and had also expressed its view that if the Secretary-General had wished in the future to apply the proposal beyond the

¹ The list included the following: applicant, household member, consultant, trainee, intern, meeting participant, subcontractor, volunteer, Government representative, representative of least developed countries, military observer, police monitor, medical personnel, Government civilian personnel, Government military personnel, international contract personnel, expert (excluding high-level expert) and adviser.

categories of consultants and individual contractors, clear analysis for each category of personnel listed above would need to be provided to the General Assembly.

15. The Advisory Committee was provided with the table below, which indicates the evolution of the number of exceptions by category since the period 1996-1998. The table clearly shows that the growth in the number of exceptions reflects the increased volume of travel in the prominent traveller category.

Number of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel by category

Category	1996- 1998	1998- 2000	2000- 2002	2002- 2004	2004- 2006	2006- 2008	2008- 2010	2010- 2012	2012- 2014
Medical condition	12	23	36	53	62	45	98	136	113
Regular standard not available	19	29	21	43	16	14	21	56	28
Eminent traveller	23	31	43	60	16	35	57	72	30
Prominent traveller	19	14	16	48	22	27	58	153	459
Arduous journey	3	11	8	8	0	1	4	3	20
Security	24	28	24	26	35	56	73	94	93

16. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was informed that of the 147 additional exceptions authorized under the prominent traveller category in the period 2012-2014, as compared with the period 2010-2012, 123 (84 per cent) were related to requests from the following six entities: 21 from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; 31 from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; 41 from the Economic Commission for Africa; 17 from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; 6 from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; and 7 from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The Committee was further informed that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions relied on the convening capabilities of the United Nations to provide a forum for policy discussions to inform intergovernmental processes and facilitate negotiations and agreements among Member States, and to promote the implementation of policies and/or the creation of legal instruments, norms and standards in various areas of development. The prominent persons who participated in those meetings were high-level current or former government officials, distinguished academics and professors, or other individuals who made substantive contributions to those meetings at no cost to the Organization and contributed in a significant manner to their successful outcome. In addition, the prominent persons were often required to travel from distant places, and the requirement to travel in economy class would reduce their willingness to travel and participate in the meetings.

17. Upon enquiry the Advisory Committee was also informed that during the period 2012-2014 the Secretariat had declined authorization of 72 formal requests for exceptions submitted to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management. Furthermore, the executive officers of the requesting departments/offices also reviewed certain cases and could decide, at the departmental level, not to submit formal requests for authorization of exceptions: the total number of requests that had been declined could therefore not be provided since consolidated records for such requests were not maintained centrally.

18. Taking into account the definition of prominent person contained in paragraph 12 (d) of the report of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee

requested further explanations of the reasons for categorizing as prominent travellers the holders of functions such as Personal Assistant, Legal Adviser, Counsellor and spokesperson, as shown in the various annexes to the report. The Committee was informed that the exceptions were authorized on the basis of the specific functions held by the individuals in question: for instance, an exception was authorized for an individual travelling to represent the chair of a commission on the basis of the travel entitlement for the chair of that commission. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that such an approach could result in the granting of incorrect standards of accommodation for air travel.**

19. In view of the foregoing, the Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the criteria for determining prominent traveller status should be clarified and that definitions should be tightened and consistently applied in order to allow for a more streamlined, systematic and efficient process for responding to requests for exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel. The Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly consider establishing a clear definition and a common set of criteria for determining the prominent traveller status of individuals and that it request the Secretary-General to submit proposals in this regard for its consideration.

C. Lump-sum option

20. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include in his report on the standards of accommodation for air travel to be submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, an analysis of the impact of the implementation of its decision to reduce the provision for determining the travel-related lump-sum payment from 75 per cent to 70 per cent of the least restrictive economy class airfare and to make further proposals on modifying the lump-sum scheme. The information requested is provided in paragraphs 29 and 30 of annex XXII to the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/643).

21. In paragraph 22 of annex XXII of his report (A/69/643 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General states that reliable and complete data on the utilization rate of the lump sum and the savings directly attributable to the changes to the lump-sum payment option are currently not readily available. However, he indicates that selected data on the top eight lump-sum destinations from Headquarters shows that the 5 percentage point decrease in the entitlement has resulted in a minimum savings of 6.7 per cent in lump-sum payments. Furthermore, acceptance of the lump-sum payment option rate remains at approximately 93 per cent, and no significant drop has been observed in the selection of the lump-sum travel entitlement compared with the provision of tickets and related benefits by the Organization.

22. The Secretary-General also indicates that because the change to the lump-sum option was introduced just over a year ago, approximately half of the eligible staff members in duty stations with a 24-month home leave cycle have so far had the opportunity of using their home leave entitlement. Therefore, more experience is necessary and additional time is required to examine the matter before proposals for further change can be considered. He recommends maintaining the lump-sum provision at 70 per cent of the least restrictive economy class fare until at least the first part of the resumed seventieth session of the General Assembly, when a proposal based on the additional experience gained and an analysis thereof will be

submitted. **The Advisory Committee has no objection to the proposal of the Secretary-General.**

23. In addition, the Secretary-General indicates that the lump-sum option reduces the administrative workload associated with issuing tickets and processing travel claims relating to entitlement travel, thereby saving on staff costs. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that wider use by staff of the lump-sum option should be encouraged.**

24. According to the Secretary-General, in order to enable the Organization to continue to benefit from the lump-sum option, the amount needs to remain attractive enough for the vast majority of staff to opt for it in lieu of the issuance of air tickets, while at the same time remaining cost-effective for the Organization. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to conduct further analysis, with a view to finding the right balance between the efficiencies to be gained through a further decrease in the lump-sum payment and the higher costs resulting from a decrease of staff willing to use the lump-sum payment option, including administrative costs for issuing tickets, and to report on the outcome of his analysis in his next report. The study should also factor in and provide an estimate of the reduced administrative workload related to the use of the lump-sum payment option.**

D. Overall air travel activity and expenditure

25. In its resolution 65/268, the General Assembly noted with concern the lack of consolidated and comprehensive data on air travel across the United Nations system. In resolution 67/254 A, the Assembly stressed the importance of the provision of accurate, complete and comprehensible data as the basis for sound management and effective oversight of all costs relating to air travel. In its resolution 65/268, the Assembly requested that such information be provided in the context of the programme budget, including details by budget section and payments under the lump-sum scheme. In resolution 67/254, the Assembly reiterated its request, noting that the Secretary-General had not provided the information requested. However, the Secretariat has indicated that it is not in a position to provide the requested information, owing to the weaknesses and fragmentation of its information systems.

26. In its resolution 65/268, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to make a proposal for a mechanism to allow for the effective tracking of all costs associated with commercial air travel in the Secretariat. In response, the Secretary-General indicated, in paragraph 67 of his report on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/676), that requirements for the effective tracking of all costs associated with commercial air travel have been fully incorporated in the design of the travel module of Umoja and, furthermore, that it is expected that Umoja implementation at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions, peacekeeping missions and special political missions would enable adequate tracking and classification of all air travel charges.

27. In its report (A/67/695), the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) notes that travel represented one of the most significant categories of expenditure for the Organization, but that historically, it has been difficult to obtain consolidated

and comprehensive data on air travel expenditures across the United Nations, owing to limitations in information systems. In cooperation with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, OIOS estimated that travel expenditures (comprising costs of air tickets, lump-sum amounts, subsistence allowances, terminal expenses and shipments) for United Nations Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions for the biennium 2010-2011 were approximately \$535 million; travel expenditures for special political missions for the biennium 2010-2011 amounted to \$40 million; and for peacekeeping missions, the expenditures amounted to \$91 million and \$103 million for the financial years ended 30 June 2010 and 30 June 2011, respectively. The total travel expenditures for the United Nations over a two-year period were therefore estimated at some \$769 million.

28. The Advisory Committee requested further details on the information used to prepare budget estimates for travel-related resources. It was informed that cost estimates for budgetary purposes were provided by the travel units and travel agencies at various duty stations. Furthermore, the figures used for budgeting purposes were based on generic travel dates and itineraries and differed from actual ticket cost. The Secretariat considered it prudent to ensure that budgeting figures did not fall below actual ticket costs as this would result in budget shortfalls that could endanger programme delivery. Consequently, figures provided for budgeting purposes did not take into account tickets with significant restrictions, limited availability or seasonal fluctuation. **The Advisory Committee is concerned that the approach taken is likely to result in overbudgeting. Furthermore, given the absence of reliable information on travel expenditures, it is not clear how travel expenditures are monitored and managed, oversight exercised, accountability of managers ensured, or assurance given as to the effectiveness of internal controls (see para. 35 below).**

29. The Advisory Committee reiterates that resources for official travel should be utilized judiciously in the interest of the Organization and that before official travel is authorized as a means to implement mandated activities, full account of its cost-effectiveness and the impact on productivity resulting from prolonged absences from the office while travelling should be taken into account to determine whether other means of representation and methods of communication can be utilized instead. The Committee also emphasizes that the primary consideration in authorizing official travel should be whether direct face-to-face contact is necessary for mandate implementation. If not, then alternative methods should be employed (A/66/739).

E. Scope and content

30. The Advisory Committee considers it important to provide the General Assembly with detailed information on the exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General pursuant to the discretionary authority vested in him. It is of the view, however, that such information must be accompanied by data on the overall travel activity and related costs both at the organizational and departmental levels in order to provide the Assembly with a full picture of the situation and allow for meaningful analysis of trends.

31. The Advisory Committee also considers that the General Assembly should be provided with information and analysis on the financial impact of the numerous measures that have been adopted to improve the management of air travel pursuant to Assembly resolution 65/268, in order to allow the Assembly to better assess the improvements achieved and make adjustments, as necessary. In addition, as indicated in paragraphs 23 to 26 above, the Assembly has on multiple occasions requested that it be provided with information that is more comprehensive and of better quality in respect of overall travel expenditures, in order to support oversight and decision-making on the allocation of resources for official travel (see Assembly resolutions 65/268, section IV, para. 13, and 67/254 A, section VI, para. 6).

32. The Secretary-General indicated in paragraph 67 of his report on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/676) that, following implementation of the travel module of Umoja, whose full deployment across the Secretariat, including field missions, is planned by the end of 2015, detailed information on travel activity and costs will become available and be easily accessible. **The Advisory Committee trusts that such information will include, inter alia, comprehensive information on the volume, frequency, purpose and class of air travel (first/business/economy), the number of trips undertaken by department/office/mission, actual and planned costs, compliance with approved travel rules, such as advance purchase and authorized class of air travel, as well as information on individual travel requests, travel plans and travel expenses, such as date of booking, travel dates, itinerary and number of travel days, category of personnel, and the nature of the business being conducted.**

33. The Advisory Committee considers that the narrow focus of the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel, which is devoted almost exclusively to the presentation of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel, no longer meets the requirements of the General Assembly. While noting the limitations of current information systems, the Committee is disappointed that greater effort was not made to respond, even partially and with the data available, to the repeated requests of the Assembly for reliable information on overall travel expenditures in order to facilitate its consideration of the programme budget, taking into consideration the delays in the implementation of Umoja.

34. In the light of the upcoming implementation of the travel module of Umoja, which will make detailed information available, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to broaden the scope and enhance the content of the report of the Secretary-General to include, in addition to the information currently provided on exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General, comprehensive information on air travel activity across the entire Secretariat, including offices away from Headquarters and peacekeeping operations, as well as air travel-related costs under all sources of funding. In preparing his report, the Secretary-General should take into account the provisions and requests contained in Assembly resolutions 65/268 and 67/254 A, the observations and recommendations emanating from the audits of oversight bodies and all other relevant factors.

F. Oversight and internal controls

35. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that it is important to ensure that effective internal controls are in place, that air travel rules are being properly applied and that travel resources are being utilized in the most economical manner possible. This includes, for instance, ensuring that due consideration has been given to alternative means of representation and methods of communication before travel is authorized, that tickets are purchased in advance whenever possible and that staff participating in training-related activities travel only economy class, irrespective of the duration of the travel. The Committee considers that there is a need to conduct a performance audit of travel activity across the Secretariat in order to address the matter. **To this end, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat to conduct a performance audit of all air travel activities across the Secretariat, including offices away from Headquarters and peacekeeping operations, on the proper application of air travel rules and economical utilization of travel resources under all sources of funding.**

Audit of travel in peacekeeping operations by the Board of Auditors

36. As indicated in paragraph 2 above, the report of the Board of Auditors on peacekeeping operations for the period ended 30 June 2014 provides information on the outcome of its audit of official travel for peacekeeping operations, conducted in response to a request of the Advisory Committee (A/69/5 (Vol. II), paras. 55-82). The key findings of the Board include the following:

- (a) An increase in the expenditure on official travel, from \$46.42 million in 2011/12 to \$65.55 million in 2013/14, reflecting overexpenditure of 25 per cent;
- (b) Weak compliance with the advance purchase policy;
- (c) Insufficient monitoring and recovery of travel advances to staff members;
- (d) Avoidable expenditure in ticketing arrangements.

The Advisory Committee will revert to this issue in the context of its consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General for the budgets of peacekeeping missions for the period 2015/16.

Implementation of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

37. In its resolution 65/268, the General Assembly requested that the Secretary-General entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat to conduct a comprehensive audit of all air travel activities and related practices.

38. In its report on the comprehensive audit of air travel activities and related practices (A/67/695), OIOS indicates that the comprehensive audit of air travel activities and related practices covered air travel operations at Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna, the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. The audit included: (a) assessing the status of the implementation of provisions

in resolution 65/268 for the efficient and effective utilization of air travel resources; (b) determining the adequacy and effectiveness of processes for procuring air travel management services and delegating the authority for granting exceptions to standards of accommodation for air travel; (c) identifying all expenditures on air travel and lump-sum payments to eligible staff members; and (d) carrying out a cost-benefit analysis of the lump-sum options. OIOS issued a total of 22 recommendations for strengthening internal controls, all of which were accepted by the Secretariat.

39. Annex XXII to the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/643 and Corr.1) provides information on the implementation status of the recommendations contained in the report of OIOS on the comprehensive audit of air travel activities and related practices (A/67/695) and the lump-sum option. In his report, the Secretary-General indicates that the Department of Management has implemented the recommendations contained in the OIOS report to the extent possible. The Advisory Committee notes that, in a number of cases, it is indicated that full implementation and/or automation is dependent on the implementation of Umoja. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide a detailed update on the implementation status of the OIOS recommendations in his next report, following the deployment of Umoja.**

G. Other matters

United Nations standards of accommodation for air travel

40. The Advisory Committee observes that, in recent years, many airlines have significantly cut back, if not entirely eliminated, first-class sections on aircraft and have introduced several varieties of enhanced business-class and economy-class travel. In addition, the differences in the level of accommodation between first class and business class have been minimized in certain cases, and there are also a growing number of options offered for premium economy-class travel. In the light of the rapid pace of change in the air travel industry, which is driven by the fast-growing volume of air travel and continuous improvements in technology, and also taking into account the highly competitive nature of passenger air travel markets, the Committee is of the view that it is important to keep under constant review the developments in the travel industry and in classes of travel. **The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to conduct a review of developments in the air travel industry over time. On this basis, the Secretary-General should then provide an assessment of the United Nations standards of accommodation regarding class of air travel and, if warranted, make proposals in this regard.**

Frequent flyer miles

41. The Advisory Committee recalls that a comprehensive review by the Secretary-General of the potential application of frequent flyer miles for official travel within the United Nations concluded that the United Nations could not achieve any savings through a formal programme that manages frequent flyer miles for official travel (A/66/676, para. 64). **While noting the conclusion of the Secretary-General, the Committee nonetheless encourages the Secretary-General to continue to monitor industry best practices and the experiences of national Governments in that area.**

42. Upon enquiry as to whether frequent flyer miles accumulated by staff on official travel had been applied to purchase tickets for official travel or to upgrade a ticket purchased at a class below the entitled level of accommodation, the Advisory Committee was informed that such data was currently not available because there was no managed frequent flyer programme in place. However, pursuant to the endorsement by the General Assembly, in paragraph 2, section VI, of its resolution 67/254 A, the conclusions and recommendation contained in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/66/739), the Office of Human Resources Management was in the process of updating an information circular on travel. In accordance with paragraph 11 of the report of the Committee (A/66/739), staff members are instructed not to use any frequent flyer miles gained as a result of conducting official business on behalf of the Organization for personal travel and are encouraged to use such frequent flyer miles for official travel, where feasible. The Organization relies on the integrity of staff in the usage of miles earned through official business. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to include in his next report details on the use of frequent flyer miles to purchase or upgrade tickets for official travel.**

Annex

Data on travel expenditures

Table 1

Travel expenditures for Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters^a for the period from 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2013

(United States dollars)

<i>Regular budget</i>	<i>Ticket cost</i>	<i>Non-ticket cost</i>	<i>Total travel cost</i>
Regular budget	108 710 440	73 760 673	182 471 113
Peacekeeping ^b	34 285 098	8 352 782	42 637 880
Total	142 995 538	82 113 455	225 108 993

^a United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office at Vienna, United Nations Office at Nairobi, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

^b Includes data from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2013 (2013/14).

Table 2

Travel costs related to travel requests processed in one of the eight Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) databases, including regular budget and extrabudgetary sources, and costs of travel of staff as well as travel of representatives^a

(United States dollars)

<i>Duty station</i>	<i>1 July 2010-30 June 2012</i>	<i>1 July 2012-30 June 2014</i>
Economic Commission for Africa	13 522 950.34	13 791 992.08
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	9 756,401.24	8 332 671.45
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	11 664 377.90	12 005 866.48
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	2 399 911.19	2 935 022.05
United Nations Headquarters	135 427 421.24	114 028 811.90
United Nations Office at Geneva	90 911 934.52	74 706 175.27
United Nations Office at Vienna	15 005 422.87	15 372 706.63
United Nations Office at Nairobi	53 946 282.06	54 674 896.16
Total	332 634 701.36	295 848 142.02

^a Including both ticket and non-ticket costs. Non-ticket costs include daily subsistence allowance, terminal expenses and other costs, such as excess baggage, conference fees, visa application fees, telephone/Internet charges and airport taxes.

Table 3
**United Nations Headquarters travel for 2014 and 2013, on the basis of travel
 arranged and ticketed through the Headquarters travel agency**

<i>Statistics</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>Variance (percentage)</i>
Tickets			
Total cost	\$43 300 000	\$45 700 000	(5.3)
Number purchased	16 426	15 809	3.9
Average price	\$2 636	\$2 893	(8.9)
Miles			
Miles flown	114 400 000	109 000 000	4.9
Average cost per mile	\$0.38	\$0.42	(9.7)

**General Assembly**

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Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 147

**Financing of the International Residual Mechanism
for Criminal Tribunals**

**Construction of a new facility for the International Residual
Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Arusha branch**

**Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions**

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the construction of a new facility for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Arusha branch (A/69/734). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met via videoconference with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 20 February 2015.

2. The report of the Secretary-General is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/267 on the construction of a new facility for the Mechanism, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide at the first part of its resumed sixty-ninth session a progress report on the implementation of the project, outlining, inter alia, the project expenditures and total costs. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General, inter alia, to take all measures necessary to mitigate potential risks and to ensure that the construction project is monitored closely and is completed within the approved timeline and resources.

II. Progress update

3. The report of the Secretary-General on the construction of a new facility for the Mechanism, Arusha branch (A/69/734), is the fourth progress report on the project. Information with respect to the background of the project and the related resolutions of the General Assembly on the project is contained in paragraphs 1 to 8 of the report of the Secretary-General.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 26 February 2015.

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Project site

4. The Secretary-General reports that, on 5 February 2014, the Supplementary Agreement to the Agreement between the United Nations and the United Republic of Tanzania concerning the Headquarters of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals for the Premises of the Mechanism was signed. The Supplementary Agreement, *inter alia*, formalized the grant of land from the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations and its commitment to provide temporary and permanent access roads and connection to utilities to the site of the new facility, free of charge to the United Nations. Furthermore, as required by the Supplementary Agreement, on 17 November 2014, the Government issued a certificate of occupancy to the Mechanism granting it exclusive right of occupancy of the site for a term of 99 years, free of any annual rental charges or other fees to the United Nations. The Secretary-General indicates that cooperation between the Mechanism and the Government on the project continues to be excellent. (A/69/734, paras. 10-13; see also para. 18 below on the temporary road and utilities.)

5. The Advisory Committee reiterates its appreciation to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania for its provision of land, access roads and the connection to utilities to the new facility at no cost to the United Nations. Furthermore, the Committee welcomes the continued cooperation between the Mechanism and the Government and trusts that it will be maintained through all phases of the project (A/68/777, para. 4).

Environmental impact assessment

6. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its resolution 68/267, the General Assembly noted that an environmental impact assessment would be carried out to assess the potential hazards and impact of the construction, and that the Assembly looked forward to receiving updates in this regard in the context of the next progress report. The Committee notes from the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/734, para. 18), that the environmental impact assessment for the project, which was conducted by the architectural consultant on the basis of the detailed design, concluded that no significant environmental impacts were expected to occur as a result of construction activities. According to the Secretary-General, general mitigation measures during construction will be the responsibility of the construction contractor, which, in addition to abiding by all relevant existing national regulations, will be required to submit and implement an environmental management plan. The Secretary-General does not anticipate that any additional environmental measures will need to be undertaken at United Nations expense during construction, as existing arrangements appear to be sufficient. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General indicates that mitigation measures and impacts will continue to be monitored by both the project team and the construction contractor.

Procurement activities undertaken

7. The procurement activities undertaken during the reporting period included the solicitation of the architectural and engineering consultant (the architectural consultant) and the construction services, as follows (A/69/734, paras. 16, 17, 19-23 and 43):

(a) The architectural consultant: an agreement was concluded on 26 February 2014; key elements of the design remain as presented in the second

progress report (A/67/696); and computer-generated renderings of the completed detailed design are provided in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee notes that the design takes into full consideration the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with respect to the provision of accessible building features;

(b) The construction services: the procurement exercise was, at the time of reporting by the Secretary-General, in its final phase and expected to be finalized shortly (see para. 23 below on the construction contract negotiation).

8. The Advisory Committee stresses that the General Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that the procurement of goods and services for the construction project is carried out in strict compliance with the existing regulations, rules and relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions governing procurement in the United Nations (resolution 68/267, para. 9). The Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the procurement activities undertaken for the construction of the new facility would be covered by the audit of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) as follows: (a) the current audit covered the pre-construction phase, including the procurement exercise for the architectural consultant; and (b) the procurement exercise for construction services would be covered by the audit of the construction phase (see also para. 16 below).

9. According to the Secretary-General, the Mechanism remains committed to continuing to ensure the application of local knowledge and capacity in the implementation of the project, a business presence in Africa being a key requirement in the process of selecting the architectural consultant (A/69/734, para. 14). In the case of the construction services, this was aimed at ensuring that the firm had experience with shipping, importation and the sourcing of labour and materials in the region, as well as with prevalent local design and construction practices, all of which are critical elements for the successful and timely completion of construction (ibid., para. 24). **The Advisory Committee encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to include local knowledge and capacity in the implementation of the project as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/267.**

Lessons learned

10. The Advisory Committee notes from the report of the Secretary-General that a number of lessons learned by the Secretariat from other capital projects have been applied to the project, such as (a) the conformity of the detailed design to the contractual timeline, the authorized budget and the conceptual design; (b) the recruitment of a dedicated Project Manager, who provides integrated management and day-to-day coordination of the project; and (c) the provision by the Office of Legal Affairs of wide-ranging legal support and assistance, including the use of a standard form of contract familiar to local contractors (A/69/734, paras. 15, 27 and 32).

11. The Advisory Committee welcomes the application of some of the lessons learned from other capital projects in the planning process for the construction of the new facility at the Arusha branch. The Committee reiterates the importance of drawing lessons from the experience of other construction projects, especially the need for requisite experience and skills of any consultants engaged as well as proactive measures to mitigate delays (A/68/777, para. 8).

Potential cooperation with other judicial institutions

12. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Mechanism met with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption in order to explore possible opportunities for future cooperation, including the possibility of sharing facilities, particularly a courtroom (A/68/777, paras. 9 and 10). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, during the reporting period, the Mechanism had continued discussions with the entities, including the African Institute for International Law, on issues of mutual interest; however, the projects of the other entities were still at the early planning stage. As for the International Criminal Court, the Committee was informed that discussions had continued with regard to the possibility of holding trials in Arusha and that the matter was currently under judicial consideration.

13. The Advisory Committee notes the continued efforts made by the Mechanism to seek cooperation with other judicial institutions in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/244 B and encourages the Secretary-General to continue exploring such opportunities (A/68/777, para. 11).

Flexible use of office space

14. In the context of its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on a comprehensive business case for the application of flexible workspace strategies at the United Nations (A/69/749), the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that seat-sharing strategies would not be appropriate in Arusha given the very small staffing of the Mechanism and that all regular staff (an estimated 90) and temporary staff (up to 80) during surge workload periods would need to be accommodated at the same time. The programmatic planning for the Arusha compound had, therefore, factored additional, mostly touch-down spaces to provide the required accommodation under the foreseen surge conditions. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly had reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to apply flexible use of office space in the Arusha branch project, upon approval by the General Assembly of flexible workspace arrangements in the Secretariat (resolution 68/267, para. 7). The comments and observations of the Advisory Committee on the application of flexible workspace strategies are contained in its related report.

III. Project governance and oversight

15. Concerning the project governance and oversight (A/69/734, paras. 25-27), it is indicated that (a) the Assistant Secretary-General, Registrar, of the Mechanism is the project owner, and plays a leading role in ensuring full compliance with United Nations oversight instruments and the efficient implementation of the project; (b) the project owner is assisted by the Head of Registry, Arusha branch, who provides day-to-day leadership of the project on the ground and engages with government authorities at both the regional and national levels; and (c) the dedicated Project Manager provides integrated management and coordination of the project.

16. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/244 B, requested the Secretary-General to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services with ensuring effective oversight of the implementation of the construction of the facility and with submitting to the Assembly information on key findings in the context of its annual reports. The Secretary-General reports that the first formal audit of the project, focused on planning and governance, began in

December 2014 (A/69/734, paras. 36-37). The Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the three-stage audit process would cover pre-construction, construction and post-occupancy. In addition, according to the Secretary-General, prior to the commencement of the formal audit, the project team of the Mechanism in Arusha met periodically with the Chief Resident Auditor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in order to ensure that OIOS was kept informed of the project and its status (*ibid.*, para. 37). **The Advisory Committee notes the progress made in the audit by OIOS and stresses the important roles played by the project governance and oversight bodies.**

IV. Project schedule, expenditures and contingency

Project schedule

17. The Advisory Committee recalls that the project duration was shortened from the initially estimated five years and three months to four years (A/67/768, para. 15) and that the project earlier experienced a delay of approximately two months (A/68/777, para. 13). The Advisory Committee notes that the project schedule has again been revised: the date for the completion of the construction and occupancy has been postponed from late 2015 to early 2016 (A/69/734, annex II). The Secretary-General acknowledges that this reflects four additional weeks compared with the schedule contained in his previous report (A/68/724). **The Advisory Committee is concerned about the reported further delay of four weeks in the project schedule. The Committee is of the view that the Secretary-General should take all possible actions to make up for lost time. The Committee continues to stress that the Mechanism must monitor the project more closely and take measures necessary to mitigate potential risks so as to ensure that it is completed within the overall timeline (A/68/777, para. 13).**

18. According to the Secretary-General, construction work is anticipated to begin in February 2015, instead of January, with (a) the conclusion of the negotiations with the selected bidder for the construction services early in 2015; and (b) the completion of a temporary access road and connection to utilities to the site by the Government, which remained pending at the time of the reporting by the Secretary-General (A/69/734, paras. 13, 43 and 44). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that works for the construction of the temporary road by the Government began on 6 February 2015 and that the activities related to the connection of utilities had also been initiated. The Mechanism was given sufficient reassurances by representatives of the Government that the works would proceed and be concluded in a timely fashion. Furthermore, the negotiation between the Organization and the construction company was concluded on the same day. It was indicated to the Committee that the positive developments had further enhanced the expectation that construction would begin in February 2015. **The Advisory Committee welcomes the start of the works related to the temporary access road and connection to the utilities by the Government.**

Project budget and expenditures

19. The total resources approved by the General Assembly for the project amount to \$8,787,700, inclusive of a provision for contingency in the amount of \$1,050,371 (see paras. 26-30 below on contingency). It is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General that expenditures amounted to \$1,194,235 as at 31 December 2014 (A/69/734, paras. 46-48 and table).

20. As shown in the table in the report of the Secretary-General (*ibid.*, para. 47; see also table 1 below), the full budgeted amount of \$636,589 under architect fees is reported as actual expenditure in 2014, no expenditure being projected for 2015. However, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 19 of the report of the Secretary-General that on 26 February 2014 a contract with the architectural consultant was concluded for the provision of detailed design and tender documents, and construction management services once construction is under way. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that (a) the amount of \$636,589 under architect fees had been obligated, but had not been disbursed in full; (b) services for the construction administration and site supervision amounted to \$232,410 (the contract signed with the architectural consultant in February 2014 was for full architectural services and therefore encompassed construction management services); and (c) under the terms of the contract, payment was made following the satisfactory completion of each stage of work.

21. The Advisory Committee notes that, as the construction phase of the project has yet to start, the obligated amount of \$232,410 for construction management services under architect fees will be disbursed only after the start of the construction in 2015. Based on the information received, it was not clear to the Committee what were the levels of actual disbursements for 2014 and obligations. The Committee therefore requested a revised table to reflect disbursements and obligations (see table 1).

Table 1
Disbursements and obligations, 2014

(United States dollars)

Description	Approved ^a	Expenditure			Projected expenditure from January 2015 until completion of the project	Total
		2013	2014 actual disbursements	2014 obligations to be disbursed in 2015		
Construction	6 365 887	—	2 912	—	6 362 975	6 365 887
Architect and project management						
Architect fees ^b	636 589	—	399 222	237 367	—	636 589
Project supervision and management ^c	635 800	155 919	166 560	—	313 321	635 800
Travel ^d	99 086	12 396	47 688	20 491	18 511	99 086
Subtotal	1 371 475	168 315	613 470	257 858	331 832	1 371 475
Total project cost	7 737 362	168 315	616 382	257 858	6 694 807	7 737 362
Contingency ^e	1 050 371	—	—	151 680	898 691	1 050 371
Overall costs (inclusive of contingency)	8 787 733	168 315	616 382	409 538	7 593 498	8 787 733

^a Approved budget as presented in A/67/696, annex II.

^b Reflects the cost of hiring an external architectural consultant firm to produce detailed construction documents, perform construction administration duties and assume the responsibility of architect of record.

^c Reflects the cost of hiring a project manager for day-to-day management and coordination of the project activities.

^d Reflects the cost of travel of staff between New York, The Hague and Arusha to provide technical assistance to the project.

^e Calculated at 15 per cent of the construction costs and architect fees (which is a percentage of the construction costs).

22. Moreover, a related matter is the amount of \$151,680 charged to the project contingency provision to cover the higher-than-budgeted cost for architect fees (see para. 27 below). The Advisory Committee believes that it is not appropriate at this stage to charge the amount of \$151,680 to the contingency provision (see also paras. 28 and 29 below).

23. With respect to the resources required for the remaining period of the project until its completion, the Secretary-General indicated that, as negotiations with the construction contractor had not yet been concluded at the time of reporting, he was not in a position to provide the projected amount of the construction contract. However, on the basis of planned negotiation strategies, the Secretary-General expected that the contract would be awarded within the overall authorized project budget (A/69/734, para. 49). The Advisory Committee requested an update on the status of the negotiations and was informed that the negotiations with the proposed construction company had been successfully concluded on 6 February 2015 and that it was anticipated that the contract would be signed expeditiously. **The Advisory Committee, therefore, requests that the Secretary-General provide the most up-to-date information on the construction contract and the related cost to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/734).**

24. The Advisory Committee further requested assurances concerning mitigation measures against potential cost escalations. The Advisory Committee was informed that the Mechanism had taken measures to mitigate the risk of potential cost escalations, such as (a) the use of the United States dollar instead of the local currency as the currency for both the architectural and construction services contracts to reduce the risk of cost escalation due to currency exchange fluctuations; and (b) the use of a lump sum fixed-price contract for the construction services to reduce the risk of cost escalations. It was also informed that an amount equivalent to 4 per cent per annum for overall changes in the general market and specific costs in the construction trade was included in the approved budget. The project may however be subject to several additional risks outside the direct control of the Organization, including the escalation of cost beyond the 4 per cent per annum; escalation of prices of imported materials, such as mechanical, fire-fighting and electrical equipment, which may not be available locally; and any additional costs that could not reasonably have been foreseen. It was further indicated to the Committee that the 15 per cent overall contingency provision in the project was designed, partially, to mitigate risks that were not reasonably foreseeable, including an unexpected spike in the prices of raw materials, or, generally, architectural and construction market conditions which may be difficult to predict.

25. The Advisory Committee recalls that when presenting the detailed cost estimates of the project to the General Assembly at the first part of its resumed sixty-seventh session, the Secretary-General stated that (a) the total cost of the project was estimated at \$7,737,362, inclusive of construction costs, site works, architect fees, project supervision and management and travel of staff to provide technical assistance; and (b) that estimate did not include a project contingency of 15 per cent (\$1,050,371). According to the Secretary-General, on the basis of lessons learned from the Organization's capital projects in recent years, the contingency would be required and would serve to cover unforeseen project conditions, such as field conditions, errors and omissions by the architect or other unexpected contractual issues. The Secretary-General recommended that this

approach be applied to the project, on the understanding that any unspent balance of the contingency would be returned to Member States at the completion of the project (A/67/696, paras. 50-51).

Project contingency

26. The Advisory Committee requested information with respect to the project contingency, which, in its view, should be separate from the project budget approved for the construction. The Committee was provided with two tables (tables 2 and 3 below). **The Committee notes that the contingency provision is referred to as "approved contingency budget" in footnote a to table 3 below and points out that the project contingency provision is not part of the project budget and should not be assumed to be such (see also para. 25 above and para. 28 below).**

Table 2

Expenditure for the period 2013-2015 (exclusive of contingency)

(United States dollars)

<i>Description</i>	<i>Approved^a</i>	<i>Actual expenditure</i>		<i>Projected expenditure from January 2015 to completion of project</i>	<i>Total</i>
		<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>		
Construction	6 365 887	0	2 912	6 362 975	6 365 887
Architect and project management					
Architect fees ^b	636 589	0	636 589	0	636 589
Project supervision and management ^c	635 800	155 919	166 560	313 321	635 800
Travel ^d	99 086	12 396	68 179	18 511	99 086
Subtotal	1 371 475	168 315	871 328	331 832	1 371 475
Total project cost (exclusive of contingency)	7 737 362	168 315	874 240	6 694 807	7 737 362

^a Approved budget as presented in A/67/696, annex II, exclusive of contingency.

^b Reflects the cost of hiring an external architectural consultant firm to produce detailed construction documents, perform construction administration duties and assume the responsibility of architect of record. It should be noted that, in addition to the total amount budgeted, an amount of \$151,680 was spent for this item from contingency (see table 3).

^c Reflects the cost of hiring a project manager for day-to-day management and coordination of the project activities.

^d Reflects the cost of travel of staff between New York, The Hague and Arusha to provide technical assistance to the project.

Table 3
Breakdown of contingency provisions and expenditure for the period 2013-2015
 (United States dollars)

<i>Description</i>	<i>Approved contingency^a</i>	<i>Actual contingency expenditure</i>		<i>Total remaining contingency</i>
		<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	
Construction^b	954 883	—	—	898 691
Architect and project management^b				
Architect fees	95 488	—	151 680	—
Project supervision and management	—	—	—	—
Travel	—	—	—	—
Subtotal	95 488	—	151 680	—
Total	1 050 371	—	151 680	898 691

^a Approved contingency budget as presented in A/67/696, annex II.

^b Calculated at 15 per cent of the construction costs and architect fees.

27. The Secretary-General indicates that, of the total expenditure of \$1,194,235 as at 31 December 2014, an amount of \$151,680 was charged to the project's contingency provision to cover the higher-than-budgeted costs for architect fees that resulted from the competitive tender process (A/69/734, para. 48). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, although the value of the contract for the architectural and engineering consultancy services was higher than the estimated budget compiled before the tender process, the fees were reasonable, according to the Secretariat, for the required scope of services and a best-value-for-money recommendation was made in accordance with the procurement guidelines of the Organization. The commercial evaluation indicated that the bid of the selected architectural and engineering consultant was also consistent with the prevailing market conditions. The Advisory Committee points out that, as shown in tables 2 and 3 above, the actual amount granted for the architectural and engineering consultancy services exceeds not only the provision for architect fees under the construction budget (\$636,589), but also the provision under the contingency (\$95,488). The Committee is, therefore, concerned over the higher-than-budgeted amount awarded for the architectural and engineering consultancy services. The Committee questions the budgetary accuracy and planning in the budget formulation process and stresses the need for improvement.

28. The Advisory Committee has made comments and observations on issues related to project contingency and management, in particular in the context of the strategic heritage plan, based on the lessons learned from the implementation of the capital master plan (see A/68/585, paras. 73-81). Concerning managing contingency provisions and the relationship between contingency and project risks, the Committee recalls that, according to the Board of Auditors, a contingency is a specific budgetary provision which is allocated so that a project can quickly address the cost impact of project risks, should they arise, without needing to delay the project and negotiate increased funding. However, it is crucial that the contingency funding is not used as a device to absorb general increases in project costs and that how and when such provisions have been used are clearly reported. Furthermore,

according to the Board of Auditors, good practice dictates that, prior to the approval of a major project, the level of contingency required is calculated based on the types of risk which may emerge and the cost of mitigation.¹ The Board has observed that the key differences between United Nations projects and what the Board understands as best practice are the following: (a) the use of contingency funds should be approved transparently by a governing body, such as a steering committee, not by the project; and (b) the use of the contingency should not be assumed, and should be approved only to mitigate the specific risk it was established for. If no such risks arise, the funding should be returned at the end of the project (*ibid.*, paras. 77 and 78). **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to follow the best practice as recommended by the Board of Auditors with respect to project contingency provisions in future capital projects. As for the ongoing project for the Mechanism, the Advisory Committee is of the view that, since the project contingency provision is calculated at 15 per cent of the construction cost, rather than linked to individual risks as the best practice dictates, it is a matter of principle that the Secretary-General should identify mitigation measures before charging any higher-than-budgeted amounts to the project contingency provision.**

29. The Advisory Committee has repeatedly expressed its expectation that project costs will be met from within the approved resources for the construction of the new facility for the Mechanism, in order to obviate the need for utilizing contingency provisions (A/68/777, para. 14, and A/67/768, para. 17). The Committee notes with concern that the Mechanism charged the higher-than-budgeted architect fees to the project contingency provision at the early stage of the project, when possibilities for absorbing the higher-than-budgeted amount still exist. The Committee is of the view that it is not appropriate to charge the amount to the contingency provision at this stage. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to make every effort to absorb the higher-than-budgeted amount related to the architect fees without charging it to the project contingency provision.

30. Considering the remaining phases of the project, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General (a) to identify all mitigation measures with a view to absorbing cost escalations within the project construction budget; (b) to refrain, to the maximum extent possible, from charging cost escalations to the contingency provision; and (c) to make every effort to ensure that the project will be completed within the budget approved for the construction without recourse to the contingency provision (see also para. 25 above).

Utilization of useable furniture and equipment

31. With respect to the utilization of useable furniture and equipment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly has encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to explore the possibilities for the use

¹ According to the Secretary-General, "risks will be quantified to assess whether the contingency and the amount budgeted will be adequate" (A/67/696, para. 45).

of such furniture and equipment and to report thereon in the context of future progress reports (resolution 68/267, para. 6). The Secretary-General reports that, owing to the proximity of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to the new facility and its nearer closure date, the Mechanism and the Tribunal have already identified certain furniture, such as shelving, and equipment in the areas of security and information and communications technology that may be able to be transferred to the new facility (A/69/734, para. 50). **The Advisory Committee encourages the Secretary-General to continue to explore such possibilities as requested by the General Assembly.**

32. In addition, the Advisory Committee notes that the Secretary-General does not provide information on the value of the assets identified from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for reuse, or information on efforts undertaken to identify assets from the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide the value of the assets identified in his next progress report to the Assembly.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

33. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Secretary-General, taking into account its comments and observations in the preceding paragraphs.

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Agenda item 115

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

**Letter dated 20 February 2015 from the Permanent
Representatives of China, India and the Russian Federation to
the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

We have the honour to inform you that the 13th meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Russian Federation, the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China was held on 2 February 2015 in Beijing, China. At the end of the meeting, the Foreign Ministers issued a joint communiqué (see annex). The communiqué covers the consensus among the three countries on the current international situation, trilateral cooperation and international and regional issues of common concern, aimed at promoting the construction of a new model of international relations with win-win cooperation at its core and propelling the courses of democratization of international relations and multipolarization of the world.

Therefore, it would be highly appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 115.

(Signed) **Liu Jieyi**
Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations

(Signed) **Asoke Kumar Mukerji**
Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

(Signed) **Vitaly Churkin**
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation
to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 20 February 2015 from the Permanent Representatives of China, India and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Joint communiqué of the 13th meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Russian Federation, the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China

1. The Foreign Ministers of the Russian Federation, the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China held their 13th meeting in Beijing, China, on 2 February 2015.
2. The Ministers agreed that Russia, India and China, as countries with important influence at the international and regional levels and with emerging market economies, need to further strengthen coordination on global issues and practical cooperation, in the spirit of openness, solidarity, mutual understanding and trust. They emphasized that cooperation between their countries is conducive to maintaining international and regional peace and stability and promoting global economic growth and prosperity.
3. The Ministers reviewed progress in their practical cooperation since their New Delhi meeting on 10 November 2013. They agreed that Russia, India and China should enhance their cooperation in think tanks, business, agriculture, disaster mitigation and relief, medical services and public health. The Ministers explored potential for cooperation in oil and natural gas production and transportation, as well as in other fields of energy, high tech, environmental protection and connectivity. They agreed to promote parliamentary, media, cultural and youth exchanges, including visits of young diplomats. They expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the thirteenth Trilateral Academic Conference, held in Moscow in July 2014, and welcomed the fourteenth Trilateral Academic Conference, to be held in China in May 2015.
4. The Ministers noted the significant and rapid changes underway in the world and underlined that the international community should remain committed to democratization of international relations and multipolarity. They stressed the importance of pursuing a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation. Russia, India and China are determined to build a more just, fair and stable international political and economic order in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and other basic norms of international law. The Ministers stressed the need to respect the diversity of civilizations and the independent choice of development path and social system by the people of all countries, and to support peaceful settlement of disputes through political and diplomatic means. They expressed their support for the idea of adopting a General Assembly resolution on the inadmissibility of intervention and interference in the internal affairs of States. They opposed forced regime change in any country from the outside, or imposition of unilateral sanctions based on domestic laws.
5. The Ministers recognized that the year 2015 marks the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and victory in the Second World War, and paid tribute to all those who fought against Fascism and for freedom. Russia, India and China affirmed the need to solemnly commemorate those historic moments of

great significance in human history and their commitment to safeguarding a fair and equitable international order based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, including preventing war and conflict and promoting the progress and development of mankind. The Ministers welcomed the inclusion of the item "Seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War" in the agenda of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and supported the United Nations and Member States in initiating and organizing commemorative events.

6. The Ministers reiterated their strong commitment to the United Nations as a universal multilateral organization entrusted with the mandate of helping the world community maintain international peace and security, advance common development and promote and protect human rights. The United Nations enjoys universal membership and is at the very centre of global governance and multilateralism. The Ministers recalled the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. They reaffirmed the need for comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more representative and efficient, so that it can better respond to global challenges. The Foreign Ministers of China and Russia reiterated the importance they attached to the status of India in international affairs and supported its aspiration to play a greater role in the United Nations.

7. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to strengthening coordination and cooperation in a joint effort to maintain lasting peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, and welcomed the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia and the Shanghai Declaration adopted at the Summit. The Ministers pledged to work together to seek common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. They called for the development of an open, inclusive, indivisible and transparent security and cooperation architecture in the region on the basis of universally recognized principles of international law. In this regard, they welcomed the continued discussion on regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region under the framework of the East Asia Summit.

8. The Ministers further underlined the necessity of strengthening coordination and cooperation in various regional forums and organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus, the Asia-Europe Meeting and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, so as to contribute to maintaining regional peace and stability and to promote regional development and prosperity. In this connection, they agreed to establish a trilateral Russia-India-China consultation mechanism on Asia-Pacific affairs, with the first meeting to be held at an early date.

9. Russia, India and China attached special importance to their cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), regarding it as one of the key instruments in promoting multilateral political, security, economic and humanitarian interaction in the region. China and India shared the plans of Russia's chairmanship of the SCO from 2014 to 2015 and would support and participate comprehensively in preparing the SCO summit meeting of the Organization in Ufa, Russia, in July 2015. China and Russia welcomed India's application for full membership in the SCO and supported India in joining the SCO after completing all necessary negotiations and legal processes.

10. The Ministers reiterated that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes, is a threat to international peace and security, a grave violation of human rights and a crime against

humanity. The Ministers affirmed the need for all countries to join efforts in combating terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and principles and norms of international law, and for the robust implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. They called for the early conclusion of negotiations on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. The Ministers reiterated that there can be no ideological, religious, political, racial, ethnic or any other justification for acts of terrorism. They underlined the need to bring to justice perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of terrorist acts. Highly alarmed by the new trends in international terrorist acts, the Ministers emphasized the need to step up information-gathering and -sharing, to prevent the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) for the purposes of recruitment and incitement to commit terrorist acts, as well as for the financing, planning and preparation of their activities, to block the channels of terrorist movement and financing of terrorism, and to promote de-radicalization, while respecting international law.

11. The Ministers were of the view that the international community should make joint efforts to counter the threat of the use of information and communication technologies for military, political, criminal and terrorist purposes through international exchanges and cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and to build a peaceful, secure, open and cooperative information space. They underscored that the sovereignty of a State over the Internet and State conduct of ICT-related activities should be respected. They expressed their support for the formulation of universally recognized international rules of responsible State behaviour in information space within the United Nations framework and for the advancement of reform of the international Internet governance mechanism as enshrined in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. In this regard, the Ministers reaffirmed common views and approaches set forth in the Fortaleza Declaration of the Sixth Summit of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), held on 15 July 2014.

12. The Ministers noted that preventing an arms race in outer space is in the interests of maintaining international peace and security and promoting and strengthening international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, highlighting the prevention of the placement of weapons of any kind in outer space as one of its main elements. The Ministers also noted the importance of establishing and developing a more focused dialogue and closer cooperative relationship among representatives of Russia, India and China with a view to advancing the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

13. The Ministers supported the political transition in Afghanistan through the presidential elections and the security transition from the International Security Assistance Force to the Afghan National Security Forces. The security transition should be accompanied by adequate measures for increasing the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces so that they will be capable of providing security for the whole country and population of Afghanistan. The Ministers affirmed their support for broad and inclusive peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan that is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, as well as for assisting Afghanistan's integration into the region through its expanded trade and transport networks and regional connectivity. The Ministers stressed that it is important for the international

community to remain engaged in Afghanistan and fulfil its long-term commitments on civilian and security assistance. They supported the core coordinating role of the United Nations in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan. The Ministers highly valued the positive results of the fourth ministerial meeting of the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, held in Beijing, which contributed to strengthening regional cooperation and facilitating peace, rehabilitation and economic reconstruction in Afghanistan. Russia, India and China stressed their commitment to implementing the Beijing Declaration for security and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region.

14. The Ministers affirmed their support for efforts to seek a comprehensive and long-term solution to the Iranian nuclear issue through political and diplomatic means. They welcomed the extension of negotiations between the five plus one group and Iran, and hoped that the two sides will intensify diplomatic efforts with a view to reaching a comprehensive agreement at an early date. The Ministers encouraged Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to enhance cooperation to resolve all the outstanding issues. The Ministers stressed that once the IAEA confirms the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme by means of applying stringent monitoring and resolving all past and present issues of concern, Iran will fully enjoy all the rights to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including uranium enrichment, under strict IAEA safeguards and consistent with its international obligations.

15. The Ministers discussed the developments in the Israel-Palestine conflict. They stressed that its further deterioration may have a negative impact on the prospects of both the peace process and Middle East affairs on the whole. They urged Israel and Palestine to exercise restraint and to take effective measures to avoid further escalation of tensions. The Ministers supported the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, with the purpose of establishing a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel. They appealed to the international community, particularly the Middle East Quartet, to continue its efforts aimed at achieving this end. The Ministers supported the Security Council in playing its due role in solving the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Ministers urged the international community to provide continued assistance and support for the alleviation of the humanitarian situation in Palestine.

16. The Ministers discussed the latest developments in Syria. They reiterated that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis and urged all parties to abjure violence and resume peace negotiations based on the Geneva communiqué of June 2012. The Ministers called on the Syrian government and opposition factions to resume the Geneva process as soon as possible, stick to the approach of political settlement, draw on the useful experience of others to find a "middle way" that conforms to Syria's national conditions and accommodates the interests of all parties, and start the national reconciliation process at an early date. The Ministers supported the mediation efforts by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his Special Envoy to secure "incremental freeze zones" and to allow humanitarian aid to civilians. They highly valued the efforts by Russia to convene the first meeting of inter-Syrian consultations between representatives of the Syrian Government and opposition groups in January 2015. The Ministers welcomed the

important achievements made in the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons, and complimented the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in its efforts towards the elimination and destruction of chemical weapons in Syria. They expressed support for the efforts of the Syrian Government to combat terrorism. They called on all parties in Syria to implement relevant resolutions of the Security Council and to fully cooperate with the United Nations and relevant international organizations in their humanitarian efforts. They called on the international community to abide by the guiding principles of the United Nations on humanitarian assistance.

17. The Ministers expressed deep concern over the ongoing turmoil in Iraq and its spillover effects, and emphasized their respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and their support for the efforts of the Iraqi Government to uphold domestic stability and to combat terrorism. They hoped that all parties in Iraq will enhance unity and reconciliation so as to swiftly restore national stability and social order. The Ministers urged all parties concerned to refrain from interference, which could further aggravate the situation. They called on all parties to support the Iraqi Government and people in their efforts to build a stable, inclusive and united Iraq, taking into account the interests of all segments of Iraqi society. The Ministers urged the international community to provide continued assistance and humanitarian support for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced people.

18. The Ministers expressed deep concern about the current crisis in Ukraine and called on all parties in the inter-Ukraine conflict to exercise restraint and fully implement the Minsk Protocol, engage in comprehensive dialogue and pursue a peaceful resolution of the crisis through political negotiations. The Ministers stressed that an independent, objective, fair and transparent international investigation should be carried out with regard to the crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, and that the parties concerned should engage in cooperation within the framework of Security Council resolution 2166 (2014).

19. The Ministers expressed their support for improved global economic governance to ensure sound and stable growth of the world economy. They called for immediate reform of the international financial system to increase the voice and representation of emerging markets and developing countries, with a focus on the implementation of the 2010 International Monetary Fund quota and governance reforms by the end of 2015. They stressed the need for international financial institutions to provide more resources to promote development. The Ministers reiterated their commitments to enhancing cooperation within the framework of the Group of 20 (G20), and called on all G20 members to strengthen macroeconomic policy coordination, to reject protectionism as well as all forms of unilateral measures of economic pressure taken without relevant decisions of the Security Council, to safeguard the multilateral trading system centred around the World Trade Organization (WTO), to build an open world economy and to play an important role in global economic governance. Russia and India welcome and support the efforts of China to host the 2016 G20 Summit. The Ministers reiterated their readiness to contribute to its successful results.

20. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the WTO as the pre-eminent global forum for trade, including negotiating and implementing trade rules, settling trade disputes and supporting development through the integration of developing

countries into the global trading system. In this regard, they reaffirmed their commitment to the Doha Development Agenda as well as to the regular work of the WTO. The Ministers expressed their support for the forthcoming tenth ministerial conference of the WTO, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya in December 2015. They underlined the importance of tangible progress at the conference toward a successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round.

21. The Ministers noted that the emerging market economies are a significant driving force for world economic growth and have played an important role in promoting the world economic recovery. The Ministers fully recognized the significance of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held in September 2015. They called on the international community to accelerate its efforts towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and to formulate the post-2015 development agenda under the principles of equity, democracy, transparency, being Member States-driven and consensus. The post-2015 development agenda, while focusing on poverty eradication and the promotion of common development, should attach great importance to addressing the inequality and disparity between the North and the South and build a renewed global development partnership of win-win cooperation. The Ministers pledged to strengthen coordination and cooperation in the intergovernmental negotiating process.

22. The Ministers called on the international community to actively implement the follow-up process of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in accordance with the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". They welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of the proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals as the main basis for integrating the sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda. They held the view that, in promoting sustainable development, the international community should fully respect the national conditions and development paths of different countries, and focus on helping developing countries solve the problems of financing, technology and capacity-building and achieve common development.

23. The Ministers reiterated the importance attached by the three countries to the issue of climate change, and expressed their readiness to work together to further strengthen international cooperation to address climate change and its adverse effects. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of the "Lima Call for Climate Action" by the twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. They expressed confidence that the twenty-first session of the Conference, to be held in 2015, will be able to adopt a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention that will be applicable to all parties, in accordance with the principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

24. The Ministers noted that, collectively, BRICS economies have consolidated their position as the main engines for sustaining the pace of the international economy as it recovers from the recent global economic and financial crisis. Emerging market economies and developing countries continue to contribute significantly to global growth and will do so in the years to come.

25. The Ministers welcomed the successful conclusion of the sixth BRICS Summit, particularly the signing of the Agreement on the New Development Bank

and the Treaty for the Establishment of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement. They agreed to build a closer economic partnership in keeping with the BRICS spirit of openness, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation to facilitate market interlinkages, financial integration and infrastructure connectivity as well as people-to-people contacts and cultural and educational exchanges among BRICS countries. The Ministers welcomed the decision taken by the Fortaleza Summit on opening negotiations on the draft Strategy of Multilateral Economic Cooperation and the Framework of BRICS Closer Economic Partnership. China and India expressed their full support to Russia for a successful seventh summit of the BRICS leaders in July 2015.

26. The Ministers highly valued the fruitful achievements of the twenty-second Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting, including launching the process of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific, promoting innovative development, economic reform and growth and enhancing connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region. They commended China's efforts in making the conference a full success and deemed that the Meeting is of great significance in achieving the long-term development and common prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region. Acknowledging India's important role in driving global economic growth and supporting the openness of APEC, China and Russia would welcome India's participation in APEC.

27. The Ministers stressed the importance of regional connectivity, which will inject strong impetus in enhancing mutual political trust and economic cooperation and promoting cultural and people-to-people exchanges. In this context, they discussed initiatives, including China's initiatives of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road. They welcomed synergy between various initiatives to improve regional connectivity in Asia. They emphasized the necessity of exploring all connectivity options for greater economic integration of the common region and stressed that the three countries will closely coordinate and work together to ensure that various initiatives bear fruit and benefit all countries and people in the region.

28. The Ministers expressed their deep concern over the spread of the Ebola virus in some African countries and the damage it has caused to the health and safety of the local people. They decided to continue to work hand in hand in helping the African countries curb and prevent the spread of Ebola. They supported the leading and coordinating role of the United Nations and the World Health Organization in combating the disease. The Ministers called on the international community, with a long-term perspective, to help African countries strengthen their public health system and capacity building.

29. The Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation and the External Affairs Minister of the Republic of India extended their warm appreciation and sincere gratitude to the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China for hosting and making excellent arrangements for the meeting in Beijing.

30. The Ministers decided to hold the next trilateral meeting in Russia in the second half of 2015.



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Agenda item 26 (b)

Social development: social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Letter dated 18 February 2015 from the Permanent Representatives of Belarus, Egypt and Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to address you on behalf of Bangladesh, Belarus, the Comoros, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Yemen, Uganda and Zimbabwe and to inform you of the establishment of the Group of Friends of the Family. The Group was established to work at the United Nations as an informal voluntary association of like-minded countries committed to the promotion of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society, entitled to protection by society and the State.

The Group of Friends aims at promoting family-oriented policies and prioritizing the needs and priorities of the family at the national and international levels.

The Group of Friends emphasizes that the consideration of family issues at the international level should pay due attention to the national laws, traditions and religious and cultural background of the States Members of the United Nations related to the family and its role in society.

The Group of Friends emphasizes that the human rights of all individuals, without discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language or religion, can best be promoted and protected within the family environment.

The Group of Friends believes that the family is the natural environment for the growth and well-being of children and that it has the primary responsibility for nurturing and protecting children, from infancy to adolescence.

The Group of Friends stresses the ability of the family with regard to the achievement of equality between women and men and the empowerment of women.



The Group of Friends is convinced that genuine and effective sustainable development may not be achieved without the family, which plays a vital role in attaining the internationally agreed development goals.

The Group of Friends recognizes the pivotal role of the family as an important contributor to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and the goals that the States Members of the United Nations would identify as global priorities.

The Group of Friends is looking forward to constructive cooperation with all Member States and international organizations, as well as civil society and other relevant stakeholders, in the promotion of national and global family-oriented strategies and policies, programmes and initiatives that harness the unique strength of the family and its contributions to the common good of society.

We would appreciate if you would kindly circulate the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 26 (b).

(Signed) Andrei **Dapkiunas**

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations

(Signed) Amr **Aboulatta**

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations

(Signed) Alya Ahmed Saif **Al-Thani**

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations



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Agenda item 148

**Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing
of the United Nations peacekeeping operations**

Proposed budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016

Report of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

Summary

The present report contains the comments, advice and recommendations of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee on the proposed budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016.



I. Introduction

1. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee presents herein its comments, advice and recommendations to the General Assembly, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, on the budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016. The report is submitted in accordance with paragraphs 2 (c) and (d) of the Committee's terms of reference (General Assembly resolution 61/275, annex).

2. The Committee has a responsibility to examine the workplan of OIOS, taking into account the workplans of the other oversight bodies, and to advise the General Assembly thereon, to review the budget proposal of the Office, taking into account its workplan, and to make recommendations to the Assembly through the Advisory Committee. The Committee undertook its review of the OIOS workplanning process and the proposed budget for OIOS under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 during its twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions, held from 10 to 12 December 2014 and from 18 to 20 February 2015, respectively.

3. The Committee appreciates the efforts of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and OIOS in providing the Committee with the relevant documents for consideration. OIOS also provided supplementary information in response to various questions from the Committee.

II. Background

4. The proposed OIOS budget under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 is estimated at \$32,382,200 (gross), which represents an increase of \$1,289,200 (gross), or 4.1 per cent, over the prior year's approved budget of \$31,093,000 (gross). The increase is attributed to post resources, consultancy, and official travel. The post-related costs increased by 15 per cent, from \$20,890,800 to \$24,019,600, due, inter alia, to the proposed conversion of 12 general temporary assistance positions to posts. Consequent to the proposed conversion of general temporary assistance resources to regular posts, the proposed requirement for general temporary assistance resources has decreased by 23.8 per cent, from \$7,665,400 to \$5,839,300. With the exception of general temporary assistance, the major decrease in the non-post costs was due to the reduction in the information technology costs.

5. The proposed financial resources for OIOS for 2015/16 as compared with 2014/15 are provided in table 1.

Table I
Financial resources
 (Thousands of United States dollars)

	Approved 2014-15	Proposed 2015-16	Variance	
			(United States dollars)	(Percentage)
Internal Audit Division	18 272.00	19 224.30	952.30	5
Inspection and Evaluation Division	949.40	1 280.80	330.40	35
Investigations Division	10 952.50	10 960.80	8.30	0
Executive Office	919.10	916.30	-2.80	0
Total	31 093.00	32 382.2	1 289.20	4.1

Note: Budget figures provided by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, Peacekeeping Financing Division.

6. The Committee recognizes that the consideration of the OIOS budget proposals with regard to the specific grade level of OIOS posts and requests for non-post resources is more appropriately within the remit of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee's review, comments and advice will therefore focus on the scope of its own terms of reference with respect to the workplanning and budgeting process of OIOS. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Committee will submit the present report to the General Assembly through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Arrangements will be made to interact with the Advisory Committee to discuss the contents of the report.

III. Comments of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

A. Internal Audit Division

7. In the reports it has issued since its inception, the Committee has made a number of recommendations relating to the work of OIOS in general and the workplanning and budgeting process of the Internal Audit Division in particular. The recommendations have included, inter alia, that OIOS employ more capacity gap analysis to its work so as to ensure that resources are allocated adequately to achieve its mandate; that OIOS ensure that workplan implementation is considered high priority since resources are allocated based on the expectation that workplans will be fully implemented; that OIOS refine its risk-based workplan so as to capture high-risk areas such as procurement; and that OIOS conduct more strategic and comprehensive audits based on risks recently identified in the major organizations. The Committee notes that OIOS has made efforts to implement most of these recommendations. The Committee also notes that the Internal Audit Division continues to employ residual risk as the basis for its workplan, and that aligning its workplan to the enterprise risks of the Organization continues to be a priority of the Office.

8. The Internal Audit Division is the largest of the three divisions of OIOS and represents close to 59 per cent of the OIOS budget under the support account. A

substantial portion of the Committee's deliberations and discussions therefore continues to be devoted to the Division's workplan and budget.

Risk-based workplan of the Internal Audit Division

9. In paragraph 26 of its report (A/64/652), the Committee recommended that the Internal Audit Division adopt and implement a more robust plan to prepare audit workplans that are based on residual risk. In paragraph 12 of its report (A/66/85), the Committee acknowledged that the audit of key controls should lead to the determination of the residual risks faced by the Organization, and looked forward to receiving future budgets of OIOS based on residual risk.

10. The Committee was informed that in developing the 2015/16 workplan, the Division validated the previous year's audit universe and updated the audit risk assessments for all the departments, programmes and missions. OIOS further indicated that the risk-ranked audit universe of auditable activities was developed taking into account the impact and likelihood of risks, and controls that exist to manage risk; previous oversight activities; results of ongoing interactions/consultations with various divisions, management, the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit. Thus, with regard to the current resource request, the Committee was informed that the Division's annual workplan was based on a residual risk-ranked audit universe of auditable entities.

11. Accordingly, as shown in table 2, OIOS indicated that the Division plans to undertake 94 audit assignments related to peacekeeping operations for the fiscal period 2015/16. This represents a 6 per cent reduction from the previous period. According to OIOS, procurement, property and facilities management, and programme and project management have presented the highest risks for a peacekeeping operation's ability to achieve its objectives, hence the significant increase in the number of audits in those areas. OIOS has indicated that it will continue to consult with management during the period, monitor the risks identified in the missions, and, if required, revise the workplan on the basis of emerging risks and priorities.

Table 2
Trends in the number and distribution of Internal Audit Division assignments

<i>Focus area</i>	<i>Fiscal year</i>					<i>Variance between 2014 and 2015</i>	
	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>Number of assignments</i>	<i>(Percentage)</i>
Logistics	13	16	19	28	16	-12	-43
Programme and project management	12	17	13	16	19	3	19
Property and facilities management	7	5	15	9	20	11	122
Safety and security	14	4	7	6	3	-3	-50
Human resources management	10	4	8	17	18	1	6
Financial management	5	6	10	12	4	-8	-67
Governance and strategy	8	10	1	0	0	0	0
Information technology	3	3	3	10	4	-6	-60
Procurement	1	6	9	2	10	8	400
Total	73	71	85	100	94	-6	-6

Thematic and stand-alone audits

12. In paragraph 8 of its report (A/65/329), the Committee noted that OIOS could add value to its oversight work by conducting more audits of crosscutting and systemic issues, i.e., thematic audits. The Committee therefore recommended that, in preparing its workplan, OIOS place greater emphasis on audits of cross-cutting issue in order to identify prevalent systemic issues that need to be addressed by management as a priority.

13. For 2015/16, OIOS indicated that it had identified several high-risk thematic areas that it planned to concentrate on, including property and facilities management, human resources management, and procurement. As table 3 shows, 34 of the 94 assignments will be thematic engagements. **The Committee continues to commend the Internal Audit Division for the effort it is putting into thematic audits, and will continue to monitor this matter in future budgets.**

Table 3
Thematic and non-thematic assignments planned by the Internal Audit Division for 2015/16, by focus area

Focus area	Number of assignments		Total
	Thematic	Non-thematic	
Logistics		16	16
Programme and project management		19	19
Property and facilities management	14	6	20
Safety and security		3	3
Human resources management	13	5	18
Financial management		4	4
Information technology		4	4
Procurement	7	3	10
Total	34	60	94

Capacity gap analysis

14. In paragraph 17 of its report (A/66/737), the Committee recommended that, as OIOS continued to move towards a robust risk-based approach to its workplan, it should conduct more capacity gap analyses. During its deliberations, the Committee was informed that the Internal Audit Division had identified some gaps in resources in two missions, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. However, according to OIOS, since those missions had just been established, no additional resources were needed currently. Rather, OIOS believes that any gaps identified will be met through redeployments from gradually downsizing missions.

15. Accordingly, OIOS has proposed the conversion of 12 general temporary assistance positions to regular posts, redeployment of 3 posts from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations Logistics Base

at Entebbe, Uganda, and the United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia, and the reassignment of 1 post from the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) to the Inspection and Evaluation Division. This will result into a net reduction of 1 post, from 98 to 97, for the Internal Audit Division.

16. **Having considered the workplan of the Internal Audit Division and taking into account the previous recommendations and clarifications from OIOS, the Committee endorses the resource requirement as proposed.**

B. Inspection and Evaluation Division

Workplan implementation

17. In paragraph 24 of its report (A/67/772), the Committee recommended that, in order for the Inspection and Evaluation Division to ensure its relevance to decision makers, it should, *inter alia*, finalize its reports in a timely manner. During the deliberations, the Committee was informed that of the three evaluation assignments for the fiscal year 2013/14, namely, evaluation of standing police capacity, evaluation of protection of civilians, and evaluation of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, only one (protection of civilians) was completed on time. The remaining two reports had not been completed as at the time of this report. **The Committee is concerned with the ripple effect the failure to complete assignments on time will have on subsequent workplans, and calls on OIOS to ensure that the delays have no such effect.**

Risk-based workplan and budget proposal

18. With respect to risk assessment, the Committee was informed that the Inspection and Evaluation Division updated its risk assessment on the basis of, *inter alia*, the Internal Audit Division risk assessment, past evaluations conducted by OIOS, analysis of the priorities set by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and other stakeholders; changes in the peacekeeping environment; and mission-specific reports from the five largest missions. The Committee was further informed that, as a result of the assessment, 37 thematic risks were identified, of which 15 were considered high risk, 7 moderate and 15 low risk.

19. In addition, with regard to mission-specific risks, OIOS noted that it had taken into account the recently established High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. OIOS identified 3 missions that were considered high risk, 5 medium risk and 7 low risk; one was not rated.

Capacity gap analysis and the budget proposal

20. In paragraph 20 of its report (A/68/773), the Committee observed the disparity in the resources available to the Inspection and Evaluation Division under the regular budget compared to those under the peacekeeping budget. In this regard, the Committee recalls its prior recommendation that OIOS conduct risk-based capacity gap analysis to determine the appropriate staffing and other resource requirements.

21. During the deliberations, the Committee was informed that the Inspection and Evaluation Division had decided to prioritize its high-risk thematic areas, and noted that it would conduct four evaluation assignments during the fiscal year 2015/16. To

complete the four assignments would require two additional posts as opposed to the current three, hence the decision of OIOS to request the reassignment of two posts from the Internal Audit Division and the Investigations Division. This will increase the number of posts for peacekeeping-related activities to 5 compared to 23 in the regular budget.

22. Having considered the workplan of the Inspection and Evaluation Division and capacity gap analysis, and the delays in completing assignments notwithstanding, the Committee endorses the resource requirement, which it feels is a step in the right direction as far as ensuring that all high-risk aspects of the Organization are adequately covered. However the Committee still believes that more needs to be done to strengthen the evaluation capacity of peacekeeping activities.

C. Investigations Division

Workplan implementation

23. In reviewing the workplan implementation of the Investigations Division, the Committee focused on its prior recommendations. Specifically, the Committee was concerned that the high vacancy rates in the peacekeeping sections of the Division would have a negative impact on the ability of OIOS to fulfil its mandate. The Committee had also expressed concerns over the delays in completing investigation assignments.

24. With respect to vacancies, the Committee was informed that OIOS had taken steps to address this issue, and that the vacancy rate would be reduced significantly when all the selected candidates were on board. The Committee notes the efforts of OIOS to fill the vacancies, which according to OIOS, if effectively implemented, would lead to a reduction in the vacancies from 37.9 per cent to about 14 per cent. A 14 per cent vacancy rate would be close to the rate for the support account indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the budget performance of the support account for peacekeeping operations (A/69/653).

25. With regard to the delays in the disposition of investigation cases, the Investigations Division informed the Committee of the continuing improvements in reducing the number of carry-over assignments. Specifically, as at 30 October 2014, the number of carry-over assignments had declined to 76, from 110 at the beginning of the year. OIOS also indicated that, of the 76 open cases, 66 per cent had been open for less than one year, 25 per cent were open for a period of one to two years and 9 per cent were open for more than two years. Compared to the previous year, when half of the cases were open for more than one year, there was a significant reduction of such cases, to 34 per cent (see figures 1 and 2 below). Furthermore the Committee was informed that the target for completing simple cases was 3 months and for complex ones 6 to 12 months. **The Committee will review this matter and opine in its annual report.**

Figure 1
Summary of all open cases in 2013

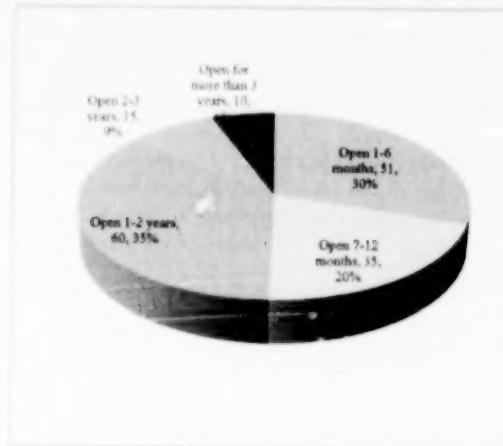
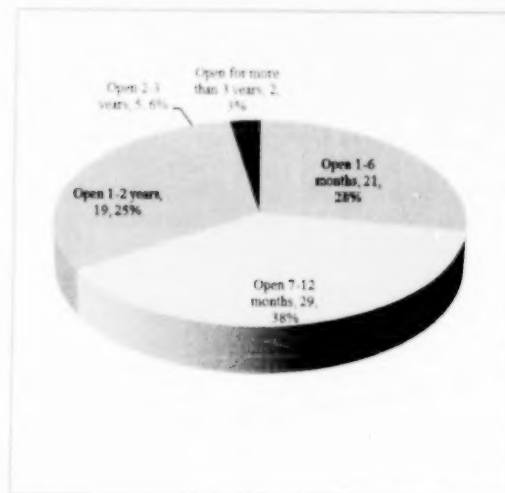


Figure 2
Summary of all open cases in 2014



Workplan and resource requirement

26. The Investigations Division request reflects the current staffing level, save for one post, referred to in paragraph 21, that is being reassigned to the Inspection and Evaluation Division. OIOS informed the Committee that the 2015/16 budget includes the cost of maintaining the new case management system that is being introduced into the Investigations Division. OIOS anticipates that the new system will lead to streamlined case management, more effective monitoring, enhanced security of information, and efficiency gains.

27. As previously reported (A/68/773, para. 25), OIOS had informed the Committee that the Division's 2014 workplan aimed to move to a more risk-based methodology, strengthen the Division, and enhance productivity by encompassing three comprehensive goals, namely, a very clear focus on fraud in high-risk operations; implementation of the restructuring of the Investigations Division, substantively on the basis of information garnered from the pilot project; and the completion of the implementation of recommendations of the OIOS independent expert panel review of the Investigations Division.

Anticipated caseload

28. During the discussions with OIOS, the Committee was informed that, given the largely reactive nature of the cases dealt with by the Investigations Division, it was always a challenge to estimate the volume of matters that the Division would address in the course of any reporting period. During the previous fiscal year, OIOS further stated that the five-year trend was for an annual intake of approximately 600 matters, some 150 of those resulting in investigations, the remaining matters being subject to referral to other entities, validation, or filed for information. For 2015/16, the Committee was informed that the expected five-year trend for the annual intake is 424 cases, of which an estimated 139 or 33 per cent will be investigated. The trend for peacekeeping operations is estimated at 293 cases, of which 93 or 32 per cent will be investigated. In contrast to previous years, OIOS expects that most of the investigations will pertain to personnel matters (46 per cent) and sexual exploitation and abuse (20 per cent), while finance and procurement will comprise 14 and 11 per cent respectively.

29. The Committee stresses the need for OIOS to address the vacancy issues in the Investigations Division in order to make progress on its open caseload. Having reviewed the workplan and budget proposal, and notwithstanding the need to show more progress in addressing the delays in completing investigations, the Committee endorses the resource level for the Investigations Division as requested, which includes the reassignment of one post to the Inspection and Evaluation Division, referred to in paragraph 21.

IV. Conclusion

30. The members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee respectfully submit the present report containing its comments and recommendations for consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the General Assembly.

(Signed) J. Christopher **Mihm**
Chair, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(Signed) Patricia X. Arriagada **Villouta**
Vice-Chair, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(Signed) Natalia A. **Bocharova**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(Signed) Richard Quartei **Quartey**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(Signed) Maria Gracia M. Pulido **Tan**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

**General Assembly**

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Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 40

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba**Note verbale dated 19 February 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary General**

The Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations, in its capacity as President Pro Tempore of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), has the honour to request, on behalf of one of its members, that the document entitled "Special declaration on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", adopted by the Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered at the third CELAC Summit, held in Belén, Costa Rica, on 28 and 29 January 2015, be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 40 (see annex).



Annex to the note verbale dated 19 February 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Special declaration on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

The Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered in Costa Rica on the occasion of the third Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held on 28 and 29 January 2015,

1. Express their strongest opposition to the coercive economic measures not supported by international law, including all those unilateral actions imposed on sovereign countries for political reasons, that impair the well-being of their peoples and are designed to prevent these countries from exercising their right to decide, by their own free will, their political, economic and social systems;

2. Reiterate their firm rejection of the application of laws and measures contrary to international law, such as the Helms-Burton Act, including its extraterritorial effect, and urge the Government of the United States of America to end its application;

3. Welcome the announcement made 17 December 2014 by the Presidents of the Republic of Cuba and of the United States of America, Raul Castro Ruz and Barack Obama, respectively, on the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. In the light of the declaration formulated by President Obama, we call on him to take all actions within his executive powers to substantially modify the embargo against Cuba and on the United States Congress to initiate, as soon as possible, a discussion on removing it;

4. Recall that, since 1992, the United Nations General Assembly has reiterated in 23 resolutions the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba by the Government of the United States of America and highlight the support given by 188 States Members of the United Nations to the most recent resolution, namely General Assembly resolution 69/5, adopted on 28 October 2014, and calls on the international community to maintain an identical attitude while the embargo against Cuba is in existence;

5. Reiterate their opinion that this embargo is contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law;

6. Reiterate their deep concern at and rejection of the strengthening of the extraterritorial dimension of the embargo, as well as the increasing persecution of Cuba's international financial transactions, which is contrary to the political will of the international community;

7. Request the Government of the United States of America to fulfil the successive resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and in response to the repeated calls from the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which is contrary to international law, severely and unjustifiably damages the well-being of the Cuban people, and affects peace and coexistence among the nations of the Americas.



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Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 118

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

1. By its resolution 68/307, the General Assembly decided to establish, at its sixty-ninth session, an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, open to all Member States.
2. In paragraph 5 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit an update on the provisions of the Assembly resolutions on revitalization addressed to the Secretariat for implementation that had not been implemented, with an indication of the constraints and reasons behind any lack of implementation, for further consideration by the Ad Hoc Working Group at the sixty-ninth session.
3. In response to a similar request in paragraph 3 of resolution 67/297, the Secretary-General had informed the General Assembly, in his report on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly of 27 February 2014 (A/68/774) that all provisions of the resolutions on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly addressed to the Secretariat had been implemented in full.
4. Since that time, the General Assembly by resolution 68/307 has given one new mandate to the Secretariat for implementation (see the annex to the present report).



Annex**Updated inventory chart of General Assembly resolutions
on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly,
issued pursuant to resolution 68/307****Provisions requiring follow-up**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Resolution</i>	<i>Text of provision</i>	<i>Implementing entity</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1.	68/307, para. 38	<i>Requests</i> the Secretary-General to submit, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, proposals to review the budget allocation to the Office of the President of the General Assembly in accordance with existing procedures.	Secretariat	The Fifth Committee will consider the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 during the main part of the seventieth session.

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Sixty-ninth session

Agenda items 19 (f) and 74

Sustainable development: Convention on Biological Diversity**Oceans and the law of the sea****Letter dated 12 February 2015 from the Executive Secretary
of the Convention on Biological Diversity addressed to the
Secretary-General**

At its twelfth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted decision XII/22, entitled "Marine and coastal biodiversity: ecologically or biologically significant marine areas".

In paragraph 3 of that decision, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to include in the ecologically or biologically significant marine areas repository the summary reports prepared by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its eighteenth meeting and to submit the reports, prior to the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to the General Assembly and in particular to its Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, as well as to parties, other Governments and relevant international organizations in line with the purpose and procedures set out in its decisions X/29 and XI/17. It also requested the Executive Secretary to present the reports to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects.

Pursuant to those requests, the summary reports on the description of areas that meet the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas are provided in all official languages of the United Nations on the official website of the Convention: <http://www.cbd.int/decisions/cop/?m=cop-12>, along with the other decisions referred to in decision XII/22.

(Signed) **Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias**

Executive Secretary
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



**General Assembly
Security Council**

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General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session
Agenda item 107

Security Council
Seventieth year

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

**Identical letters dated 24 February 2015 from the Permanent
Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the
Security Council**

On instructions from my Government, and further to our identical letters of 7 January 2015, I wish to draw your attention to the following information.

From 22 December 2014 to 22 February 2015, armed terrorist groups bombed and shelled the cities of Syria, killing 325 Syrian civilians, 57 of them children, and injuring 766 civilians, 141 of them children. Those criminal acts have now claimed a total of 17,186 Syrian civilian lives, including 1,867 children; 15,746 civilians, 2,830 of them children, have been wounded.

These figures include all Syrian governorates except for Raqqah. They do not include those members of the Syrian Arab Army, the security forces and law enforcement forces who have died in clashes with terrorist organizations and elements, such as the foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries deployed by State sponsors of terrorism in order to wreak havoc and destruction in Syria in a flagrant standing violation of Security Council resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001), 1989 (2011), 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015). Nor do the figures reflect the civilians who have been shot, or have had their throats cut, or have fallen victim to any of the other barbaric criminal methods used by the terrorist organizations.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities by condemning and holding to account State sponsors of terrorism, particularly the regimes of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and by prevailing on them to bring an end to their destructive activities, which endanger international peace and security.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 107, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Bashar Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative





General Assembly Security Council

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**General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session**

Agenda items 33, 38, 64, 66, 68, 82 and 83

**Security Council
Seventieth year**

**Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their
implications for international peace, security
and development**

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Promotion and protection of the rights of children

**Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia
and related intolerance**

Promotion and protection of human rights

The rule of law at the national and international levels

**The scope and application of the principle of
universal jurisdiction**

Letter dated 25 February 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As you are aware, the most serious international crimes, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, have been committed in the course of the ongoing aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Twenty-three years ago, an unprecedented massacre was committed against the Azerbaijani population in the town of Khojaly in the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

On the night of 25 to 26 February 1992, the Armenian armed forces invaded and ruined the town of Khojaly.

As a result of this act of genocide, 613 peaceful residents were murdered and 1,275 were taken hostage. The fate of 150 of them is still unknown. More than 1,000 people were disabled by bullet wounds; 83 children, 106 women and 70 elderly people were among the killed; and 78 of the mutilated were minors, boys and girls. Six families were murdered to the last man, 25 children lost both parents and 130 children lost one parent; 56 men were burned alive.

The level of brutality in Khojaly is shocking, and atrocities included scalping, beheading, bayoneting of pregnant women and the mutilation of bodies. The facts confirm that the intentional slaughter of the civilians in Khojaly was directed at their mass extermination only because they were Azerbaijanis. By committing this appalling



crime, its perpetrators also had a purpose, to strike terror into the hearts of people and create fear before the horrifying massacre. Indeed, Khojaly was chosen as a stage for further aggression against and occupation and ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijani territories.

Apart from the considerable information in the possession of the law enforcement agencies of Azerbaijan, the responsibility of Armenia, as well as its political and military leadership and subordinate local armed groups for the crimes committed in Khojaly has been reported, recognized and documented by numerous international mass media organizations, human rights organizations, independent sources and eyewitnesses to the tragedy.

But above all, the Republic of Armenia's responsibility for the crime in Khojaly has been admitted by Armenia itself, by its high-ranking officials and the country's public sources.

The following from the interview of President of Armenia, Mr. Sargsyan, to the British journalist Thomas de Waal leave no doubt as to the question of the perpetrator of the crime in Khojaly:

"Before Khojali, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]".¹

According to the Armenian author Markar Melkonian, who dedicated his book to his brother, the well-known international terrorist Monte Melkonian, who personally took part in the assault on Khojaly, the town "had been a strategic goal, but it had also been an act of revenge".²

Melkonian particularly mentions the role of the fighters of the two Armenian military detachments, "Arabo" and "Aramo", and describes in detail how they butchered the peaceful inhabitants of Khojaly. Thus, as he puts it, some inhabitants of the town had almost made it to safety, after fleeing for nearly six miles, when "[Armenian] soldiers had chased them down". The soldiers, in his words, "unsheathed the knives they had carried on their hips for so long, and began stabbing".³

No comments.

The date of 26 February was proclaimed as Day of Khojaly Genocide and National Mourning by the Milli Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The people of Azerbaijan will never forget the Khojaly tragedy and will continue the legitimate pursuit of justice until it prevails.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 33, 38, 64, 66, 68, 82 and 83, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yashar Aliyev
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

¹ Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York and London, 2004), p. 172.

² Markar Melkonian, *My Brother's Road: An American's Fateful Journey to Armenia* (London and New York, 2005), p. 214.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 213 and 214.